

by the same author

Guide to Modern Thought

The Book of Joad

The Testament of Joad

Guide to Modern Wickedness

Return to Philosophy

Journey Through the War Mind

God and Evil

*The Adventures of the Young Soldier in
Search of the Better World*

Pieces of Mind

and a number of philosophical works

ABOUT EDUCATION

2

by

C. E. M. JOAD

The object of education is to cause us to like and to dislike what we ought to.—ARISTOTLE

FABER & FABER LIMITED
24 Russell Square
London

*First published in Mcmxlv
by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C
Printed in Great Britain by
Purnell and Sons Limited
Paulton (Somerset) and London
All rights reserved*

*This book is produced in complete conformity
with the authorized economy standards*

CONTENTS

I. THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT	<i>page</i> 7
II. THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION	23
III. LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS	57
IV. OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	90
V. THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS	119
VI. HOW CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF THE WORTH OF EDUCATION BE CHANGED?	142
INDEX OF NAMES	172

My thanks are due to the Editor of *Everybody's Weekly* for permission to reprint the passage on Village Colleges which is included in Chapter V.

C.E.M.J.

Chapter One

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

What strikes one most forcibly when one first surveys the educational scene, is the disparity between the importance of the subject and the attention it receives. In this chapter I want to say something about this disparity. When I speak of a disparity between importance and attention I do not, of course, mean that education does not evoke discussion, memoranda, pamphlets and books. Indeed, I know of no subject more evocative in this regard. Educational bodies and individuals are inherently paper-secreting organisms and have at all times exuded a fairly substantial stream of discussion and proposal.

But now that the political parties have weighed in and education has become, as it did sometime in the second year of the war, a subject of first-rate political interest, the stream has become a flood. For a time, the would-be follower of the subject could swim with the flood, just managing to keep his head above water; but presently, as the waters continued to rise, he was driven to abandon the struggle and give up the pretence of keeping abreast of the currents of educational discussion.

Pamphlets

Sensible of the danger of exaggeration, I have just been to my pamphlet drawer to ascertain how many pamphlets and memoranda on education received during the war have succeeded in getting themselves preserved—preserved, that is to say, by me. There are enough in all conscience though I must have destroyed dozens, and they afford a spectacle at once fascinating and saddening; fascinating, because of the richness and variety of their authorship ranging from the Headmasters' Conference to the Y.W.C.A.; saddening, because of their inherent unreadability.

There are pamphlets by Associations, notably two by the W.E.A., entitled *Schools of To-day and To-morrow* and *Plan*

ABOUT EDUCATION

for Education, *A W.E.A. Report on Educational Reconstruction*. The W.E.A. have also produced a manifesto on *Public Education and the War* and a long report on *Adult Education After the War*. These are among the best of the bunch. In the same category of the first-rate—not unnaturally since this, too, has been largely sponsored by the W.E.A.—is the Report of the Council for Educational Advance, representative of the T.U.C., the Co-operative Union, the National Union of Teachers and the W.E.A. Many of the recommendations of this admirable Report, which represents a surprising degree of unanimity among Labour bodies, form the basis of proposals put forward in this book. Further to the Left there is a pamphlet on *Post-War Education* by J. P. M. Millar of the National Council of Labour Colleges, which represents what I take to be the Communist view.

There are the proposals of the different parties, of which the most notable are those contained in the report entitled *Looking Ahead. A Plan For Youth*, published by the Educational Sub-Committee of the Central Committee on Post-war Reconstruction set up by the Conservative and Unionist Party Organization. This, when it was published in September 1942, caused a very considerable fuss. An alternative series of proposals emanating from the depths of the Tory Party was published as a counterblast by a body called 'The Spirit of Britain' soon after the report had appeared. The Liberal Party has published proposals. . . .

There are reports from the various Professional Associations, for example, the National Association of Schoolmasters and the National Union of Teachers. In addition to these official pronouncements, interested persons have formed themselves into unofficial groups, held Conferences, drawn up proposals and published reports. A good example of unofficial opinion is a careful and informed pamphlet, entitled *A Democratic Reconstruction of Education*, drawn up and published by four secondary school headmasters, whose recommendations were later discussed at a large Conference of teachers and others held at County Hall in London in the spring of 1943. Various individuals have made pronouncements, for example, the former headmaster of Sherborne and Mr. Howard Whitehouse,

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

Chairman of the Society for Research in Education—an admirable effort this last, caustically dedicated 'To the Sixteen Gentlemen who for varying periods from 1914 to 1942 have held the office of President of the Board of Education'. There is a flurry of pamphlets on such topics as *Education for Citizenship* and *Education for Democracy*; there are pamphlets on Residential Adult Colleges and on the famous Village Colleges.¹ When Mr. Butler's White Paper was published in the summer of 1943, its proposals inevitably evoked a flood of pamphlets the best of which, *A New Charter for Education* by Miss Grace Leybourne, published by the Fabian Society, also dealt with the proposals of the Norwood Report upon the *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools*, and with the interim Report on the *Abolition of Tuition Fees in Grant-aided and Secondary Schools* of the Committee sitting under the Chairmanship of Lord Fleming. At the time of writing, the report of the McNair Committee on the Training and Recruitment of Teachers and the main report of the Fleming Committee on the Public Schools are still awaited. These, no doubt, will be the occasion of further pamphlets.

Inevitably, the Churches have weighed in with a series of pamphlets, in which each denomination demonstrates how important it is that its particular brand of religious doctrine should be taught to the children who don't understand it.

I do not propose to speak of the volume of pamphlets on allied and related subjects, of which that known as 'Youth'—Youth discipline, Youth services, Youth registration, Youth training, Youth clubs and so on—is perhaps the most fertile, not wishing still further to tax the patience of the reader with lists of works whose titles alone, as I have found by experiment, are sufficient to induce a feeling of distaste. This feeling is, I suspect, responsible for the extent to which this great bulk of literature remains by and large unread; on no subject, indeed, has so much been written by so many, to be read by so few.

To this generalization the report of the Conservative Educational Sub-Committee is an exception; this was widely read because it was sensational and thought to savour of Fascism. Mr. Butler's White Paper has also had a wide audience but,

¹ See chap. v, pp. 129-36.

ABOUT EDUCATION

for the rest, one must regretfully suspect that only those whose professional interest is involved have been willing to wade through them.

I have also recently accumulated a shelf of books on the subject of education many of which have been sent to me during the last two years by their kind authors. I have not read these books nor, I gather, has anybody else with the exception once again of those who are professionally interested.

Origin of this Book

Why add to their number? First, because I believe education to be of intrinsic importance, important that is to say in and for itself; secondly, because I think that the educational system that emerges from the war will shape the society of the post-war world; thirdly, because I conceive myself to know, in a general sort of way, to what pattern this educational system should conform; fourthly, because I am not without hope that I can write something on this traditionally boring subject which a small number of those who are not professionally connected with education may be tempted to read. I know that most people approach any work dealing with education with circumspection, if they approach it at all. The circumspection, in my view, is justifiable, since the books to which I have referred are, except by those who have been condemned to a sentence of hard-reading-labour, for the most part unreadable. To this generalization there are three exceptions: *Education for the People*, by Dr. F. H. Spencer, late Director of Education for the L.C.C.; *Education for a New Society*, by Ernest Green, the General Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association; and, thirdly, Sir Richard Livingstone's book, *The Future in Education*, which is in a fair way to become a classic. I shall have occasion later to refer again to these books. These three books are, however, oases in a desert of unreadability.

The effects of this unreadability are important, not the least of them being the gulf which it helps to perpetuate between those who read, write about, and practise education and the rest of the community. The interest of the former is professional; of the latter, non-existent.

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

I believe that the chance of a better educational system after the war depends, in part, upon the ability of educationists to attract the interest and win the support of ordinary people—and, more particularly, of ordinary working-class people. It is precisely this that in the following pages I seek to do. Hence, my book, while it makes an occasional bow to the technicalities of the subject, cuts them whenever it can and cuts them dead, my concern being less with the content and machinery of education than with the place which it should occupy in post-war society. I shall write, then, about what interests me; I shall digress when I want to do so, and I shall omit whatever seems to me to be boring and unimportant, however important the place which it may ordinarily occupy in the traditional consideration of the subject. I know that the best way to interest one's reader is to be interested oneself.

Reason for the Unpopularity of Writings on Education

The boringness of most books upon education is sufficiently extreme to constitute a phenomenon of interest; nor is it, as I conceive, without significance for an understanding of the extremely modest place which education occupies in the interests of the community. I have been looking at the results of a Gallup Poll, in which people were asked to grade on a scale of urgency the matters which would require attention after the war.

They are highly illuminating. 51 per cent thought that the most urgent problem after the war was finding jobs for demobilized soldiers; 23 per cent opted for housing; 7 per cent for the supply of food and clothing; 4 per cent for problems connected with the change over of industry from war to peace; 3 per cent for social security; the remaining 12 per cent covered those grouped as miscellaneous or as having no opinion. The number who mentioned education was nil and this, though we shall be over 60,000 teachers and 1,000 schools short at the end of the war, even if no educational development of any kind takes place.

ABOUT EDUCATION

(1) *Dullness and Technicality of the Subject*

Why is education not mentioned at all? The answer is in part, because the subject has never appealed to the masses. So far from winning their hearts, it has never even touched their interests; it is, for them, a dull subject. The dullness of the books that treat of it is matched by the dullness of the schools in which it is given and exceeded by the dullness of the administrative machine by which the educational system is run. A Local Education Committee is, indeed, one of the most sacred places of dull men. What, then, are the reasons for this dullness? The first I give in the words of Dr. Spencer, which I take from the Preface to his book.¹ 'It is very difficult to set out the truth in terms which the layman would easily understand and the professional find to be accurate.' Education in a word is in this country an extremely technical subject, and by the word 'education' I here mean not so much that which is taught but the system under which it is taught, and the machinery which governs that system. These, we are frequently told, cannot be understood without some understanding of the haphazard way in which the system grew up and the machinery was put together. I include, then, also the history of the system and of the machinery.

Let us glance briefly first, at the technicalities and secondly, at the history.

The curious inquirer who embarks for the first time upon a study of English education meets with a number of technical oddities whose meaning escapes him unless he knows something of education's history. He will hear, for example, of Part II and Part III Authorities and of 'precepts' issued by Schools Boards upon Rating Authorities; of the whisky-money Grant (under the Local Taxation [Customs and Excise] Act 1890) whereby money set aside from the Customs and Excise revenue to compensate publicans was diverted by Parliament to the financing of technical education. He will note the variety of the kinds and the technicality of the titles accorded to those who were teaching in elementary schools at the end of the last century, as he raises his eyebrows over Trained Certificated Teachers,

¹ *Education for the People* by F. H. Spencer.

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

Untrained Certificated Teachers, Uncertificated Teachers, Pupil Teachers, Supplementary Women Teachers and Monitors. But if he proceeds to a consideration of the names and titles of the different kinds of school his wonder will deepen into astonishment. Growing interested in the rich variety of nomenclature I have made a list of the different names of the schools that I have met with in my first cursory reading on the subject of education. Here it is:

Public Schools	County Schools
Higher Grade Schools	Reformatory Schools
Grammar Schools	Day Continuation Schools
Provided Schools	Art Schools
Selective Central Schools	Auxiliary Schools
Non-Selective Central Schools	Common Schools
Municipal Schools	Kindergarten Schools
Senior Schools	Denominational Schools
Quasi-Secondary Schools	Special-agreement Schools
Public Elementary Schools	Controlled Schools
Home Office Schools	Preparatory Schools
British Schools	Welsh Intermediate Schools
Nonconformist Schools	Grant-aided Schools
Church of England Schools	Voluntary Schools
Roman Catholic Schools	High Schools
Progressive Schools	Primary Schools
Junior Technical Schools	State Schools
Nursery Schools	Secondary Schools
Private Schools	Elementary Schools
Board Schools	Poor Law Schools
Endowed Schools	Industrial Schools
Non-provided Schools	Modern Schools
Council Schools	Parish Schools
National Schools	Technical Schools
State-aided Schools	Hospital Schools
Night Schools	Special Schools
	Trade Schools

There are over forty different titles in the list; yet it is far from exhaustive, while, to make matters worse, many of them are alternative, so that the same type of school will be referred

ABOUT EDUCATION

to under different names. All this, to say the least of it, is highly confusing to the layman.

(2) The History of the System and some of its Consequences

A second reason is to be found in the history of the subject. Considering the temporal brevity of the threads of the skein, it is surprising that they should have succeeded in becoming so tangled. Education was first made compulsory in England over seventy years ago, in 1870. There are many people still living in this country who never went to school at all because there were no schools for them to go to; many who failed to obtain a secondary education—education beyond the age of eleven—because no secondary school was in reach; many who were half-timers. A half-timer was a child who attended either in the morning 'turn' or in the afternoon 'turn', according to the exigencies of his employment in a factory; that is to say, he 'turned' to his books in the afternoon after he had already, at the age of nine or ten, worked for four and a half hours in a mill or a factory. There are still more who left school at the age of eleven or twelve because that was the age at which one left. Short, however, as history has been, it has been crowded with an immense variety of divergent but overlapping educational growths. The rational method to be followed by a community proposing to educate its young would be, one would have supposed, first to define the kind of education which it intended them to have and then by legislation to proceed to give effect to its intentions. This was, in fact, the method followed by most Continental countries. Not so, however, in England. An immense diversity of schools sometimes originated, sometimes provided, sometimes controlled, sometimes 'aided', aided that is to say with money, by different agencies, philanthropic, industrial or religious sprang up in accordance with no comprehensive plan or pre-arranged policy. Where money from public sources has been rendered available to supplement private funds, the grant has been dictated rather by the need to make good the deficiencies of private or voluntary organization, than as an expression of the assumption by the State of the obligation to educate its children.

Education in England originated from one or other of two

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

impulses, the industrial and the religious. The system, as it exists to-day, still bears traces of the circumstances of its origin.

The Impulse from Industry

. It is characteristic that the earliest legislation making provision for education in England should form part of a Factory Act. It was in 1802 that an Act was passed requiring parish apprentices between the ages of six and twelve working in textile mills to receive instruction during their hours of work from a master or mistress paid by the employer. In the Factory Bill of 1833, factory owners were encouraged to set up schools and the State contributed grants to the cost of their building. Sir Robert Peel, instigator of the first Factory Act, was a humane man and the sight of the misery of the children who worked in the textile mills from which his wealth was derived may well have prompted him to 'do something' for them. The 'something' which took the form of a little education was in the nature of a ransom. The ransom paid, Sir Robert Peel was, we must suppose, enabled to enjoy his wealth with a good conscience. The association with industry guided the development of education throughout the century. The main motive was, no doubt, utilitarian. The factories and later the railways—the newly-formed railway companies set up schools in towns like Crewe and Swindon which the railways had brought into existence—required literate workers who understood what was said to them. Given the initiating motive, it was in the nature of the case that the provisions relating to half-time at school and also to exemption from school were for the next hundred years largely dictated by the exigencies of factory employment. So, too, were the main characteristics of the educational system which the motive inspired; two, in particular, mass production and payment by results.

Mass Production and Payment by Results

The chief object being to obtain the largest number of literate workers for industry in the least possible time and at the smallest possible cost, the monitorial system was introduced. This worked as follows: a schoolmaster, salary £40 a year, would be appointed to a Factory School, complete with assis-

ABOUT EDUCATION

tant, salary £20 a year. The master and his assistant taught the head boys and girls of the school; these were dignified by the name of 'monitor'—they were all of them under the age of thirteen—and passed on what they had been taught to their juniors. The advantages of the system were obvious; each teacher taught twelve monitors; each monitor taught twelve pupils. This multiple budding of teachers from a single parent stem was an early and very successful essay in the methods of mass production.

Payment by results obtained broadly from 1860 up to the end of the century. In 1861 a new educational code came into existence which established Standards to which children were allocated according to their ability. There were six, later seven Standards, each with its appointed grade of proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The children in each Standard were examined once a year. A child who reached the prescribed degree of proficiency earned a grant for the school; for the child who did not, there was no grant. At this period the salaries of the teachers usually, and of the managers of the schools invariably, depended upon the number of grants earned. Hence, the main job of the teacher was to secure the greatest number of 'passes' at the annual examination of the children in the Standards. The teacher was conceived of as a machine, employed to turn out a certain number of 'educated' children annually with knowledge appropriate to their ages, and the machine was paid according to the results it achieved. Many 'educated' children meant that the teacher lived metaphorically on champagne and cigars; a smaller number, that he lived on beer and cigarettes; a smaller number still, that he was a teetotaller and a non-smoker and a very small number indeed, that he starved. What could be more obvious?¹ An educational system, as Dr. Spencer rightly points out, is a reflection of a civilization. If that civilization is primarily industrial, if its values are primarily those of the stomach and the pocket, if it judges by quantitative results, its education will reflect its values and its judgments. As he pertinently remarks, 'The children of Bolton or Oldham were like the cotton

¹ The same system, when under the name of Stakhanovism it was applied in recent years to the production of goods in Russia, was reprobated here on the grounds of soullessness.

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

yarn or cloth which their fathers and mothers were paid for at piecework rates. They were units.'

The cable which links our educational system to industry is still uncut. The Day Continuation School Act which Dr. A. L. Fisher passed through the 1918 Parliament provided that the employer should set aside a certain amount of his time, that is to say of the time for which he paid, for the education of the young persons he employed, so that they might attend Day Continuation Schools. The class times of these schools were fixed in relation to the working hours of neighbouring factories and the education given in them took account of the factories' needs. Even so the Act was a dead letter.

The Impulse from Religion

The other main impulse was religious. Among the first schools to be set up were those promoted by religious bodies, the National Society, a Church of England organization, and the British and Foreign School Society. As the century grew in piety and years, more and more schools were associated with one or other of the religious denominations, Anglican, Wesleyan or Catholic. In many cases the denomination owned the school and appointed the Board of Managers, and the Board of Managers appointed the teachers. The objects of the denominations which established these schools seem to have been to ensure:

- (a) That the religious teaching given to the children of parents belonging to the denomination reflected its particular brand of the Christian religion.
- (b) That the general atmosphere pervading the teaching of non-religious subjects, and especially of history and science, should always be such as was compatible with and in certain crucial cases, for example, in that of biology, such as emanated from the set of religious dogmas peculiar to the denomination.

The denominations were proud of their schools and clung to them through thick and thin, while parents who showed no other symptom of religious interest either in their practical behaviour or in their theoretical beliefs, displayed a marked enthusiasm for making up in the persons of their children the deficiencies of knowledge and zeal of which they were no doubt

ABOUT EDUCATION

conscious in themselves. When, but only when, the churches did not provide, the State stepped in to supply the deficiency. In March 1938 the number of denominational schools (I am writing of elementary schools only) was 10,550 out of a total of 20,910 and the number of scholars taught in them 1,374,000 out of a total of 4,525,000. Thus was born the problem of dual control which has dogged education ever since and still be-devils it to-day. These extrinsic factors of which I have mentioned two, industry and religion, have largely entered into the formation of our educational system and are in part responsible for the muddle which to-day baffles the inquiring layman.

(3) Native dislike of Education

A third reason is to be found in a disinterest in education which appears at first sight to be congenital among the English. This is at once the cause and the effect of the historical factors at which I have so briefly glanced. It is because as a nation we have not deeply cared about the education of the majority of our people that our educational system has grown by such haphazard stages and wears such a patchwork appearance, and that the system itself, more particularly in its visible embodiments of ugly school buildings and frowsy teachers—the legend of the frowsy teacher persists long after the reality has passed into history—being a source neither of pride, like the Navy, nor of satisfaction, like the films, lacks both publicity and prestige; that the amount of the grants from all government authorities to all English Universities in the year 1937–8 should be two millions compared with an American figure of thirty-four millions, and that the number of students at English universities should be fifty thousand compared with over one million in America and of whole-time university teachers four thousand as compared with an American figure of one hundred thousand;¹ that England should be the only European country with a standard university degree course of three instead of four years; that the total amount of public money

¹ The population of the United States of America is about three times that of Great Britain, so our figures ought, by American standards, to be eleven million pounds, three hundred and thirty-three thousand students and thirty-three thousand university teachers.

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

spent on education from both national and local funds was before the war one hundred million as compared with one hundred and fifty million spent annually on advertisements; that Local Educational Authorities are still composed very largely of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker whose main concern is that the rates should be low rather than that the standard of the education, for whose administration they are responsible, should be high; that in the week in which this paragraph is written emergency conductresses appointed to Glasgow trolley buses should be found to be earning a higher wage than many of the teachers employed by the Corporation, replete as these latter no doubt are with every accomplishment from French to the piano; that there should have been sixteen Presidents of the Board of Education in the last thirty years, of whom it is estimated that only three had any experience of or interest in education prior to their appointment to the Presidency of the Board, on their way to higher things; that the Board itself should never meet; that when the war came it seemed wholly natural and inevitable that school buildings should be forthwith requisitioned for fire-stations, First Aid posts, British Restaurants, A.R.P. stores, emergency food stores, Civil Defence lecture rooms and Rest Centres; that teachers should assume the role of society's maids of all work in which capacity their hands were set by the community to whatever odd jobs nobody else could be found to perform, so that in milk distributing, coupon collecting, form filling, meal supervising, meal money and savings contributions collecting, in calling upon evacuated parents, billeting evacuee children, taking children to air raid shelters, performing, in short, any and every conceivable job except the one job they were qualified and paid to do, they have wasted the time and used up the energy which should have been given to teaching with such disastrous effects that, instead of educating our children we are preparing a generation of little savages and barbarians to adorn that better world after the war to which we are bidden look forward; that magistrates confronted by the growing figures for non-attendance should resort to every and any shift to avoid convicting the parents, and that when in spite of their best efforts they are forced by the flagrancy of the offence to

ABOUT EDUCATION

concede a conviction should let the offending parents off with a five shilling fine; or—to take a final example from another sphere—that the control of the B.B.C., the most potent educational force in the country should be vested not in professors, headmasters, principals of colleges, inspectors of schools, writers, scholars, artists, critics and thinkers but in a Director-General, (R. W. Foot, O.B.E., M.C.¹) late director of a company concerned in the supply of gas, coke and light; in a Chairman of the Board of Governors (Sir Allan Powell), who was, prior to his appointment, Clerk to the Metropolitan Asylums Board; in a Controller (Home) (Sir Richard Maconachie, K.B.E., C.I.E.) who was formerly British Minister to Afghanistan; and in a Controller of Programmes (B. E. Nicolls) who graduated in the Indian Civil Service.

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. They all seem at first sight to point to the same conclusion, that by and large the English do not care for the things of the mind, with the result that education, which in theory should be devoted to the spreading of the love and knowledge of these things is, in fact, the Cinderella of the public services.

The Educational System as the Last Citadel of Feudalism

But though it is true that education is, indeed, a Cinderella, the statement that the English do not care for the things of the mind is misleading. Some of them, a substantial minority, do care and always have done; have, indeed, cared to such effect that in quality of intellectual achievement we are the equals of any nation in the world and the superiors of most. Look, for example, at the quality of our philosophy and the distinguished names, Berkeley, Locke, Hume, Mill, Bradley, T. H. Green, Whitehead and Russell with which it is adorned; at the long list of our front rank scientists, at Bacon, Newton, Faraday, Clerk-Maxwell, Rutherford, Eddington, Bateson, Darwin, Fleming . . . at our essayists, novelists, and poets and especially at the quality of our nature poetry, the loveliest and most abundant in any language. Or consider the academic standards maintained in the examination schools of Oxford

¹ Since this paragraph was written he has been succeeded by a journalist.

THE DISTASTEFUL SUBJECT

and Cambridge and in London; the attainments and accomplishments exhibited by members of an Oxford Senior Common Room; or the vigorous and impersonal pursuit of intellectual interests which so many of us display as undergraduates. The truth is that though intellectual interest in this country is not diffused, though it is a propensity exhibited by a small minority, the intensity of the interest is great and the quality of the output that results high. It is to this contrast, the contrast between the intellectual apathy of the many and the high intellectual attainment of the few, that education's lack of prestige is, in my view, mainly due. For, though they are no longer so to-day, the educated few were until very recently drawn exclusively from the privileged classes, and as we look back over the history of education, we cannot fail to notice the contrast between the traditional pursuit of the humanities by enlightened men of ample learning, a pursuit involving a long discipline in and familiarity with the things of the mind, and the education given to the masses which was just sufficient to enable them to be of use to the classes. One catches, in fact, a glimpse of education as the last citadel of the feudal system. The education of the few is, as it has always been, ample, intense and dignified; that of the many, scanty, cheap and nasty. Now it is of the latter, not the former that the community thinks when it thinks of education.

Conclusion

For centuries the masses received no education. When their education at last began they were given the necessary minimum, necessary not for its own sake but for the sake of its utility. A clerk who knew the multiplication table was a better clerk, just as a workman who was not always going sick was a more profitable workman. The first consideration produced an educational system; the second, a system of Public Health. Robert Lowe, Vice-President of the Committee of the Council on Education in 1860, introduced a third consideration, the consideration from politics. The franchise was being extended at the time and further extensions were foreshadowed. It was widely felt that an illiterate electorate would be dangerous; for

ABOUT EDUCATION

one thing, it would not be open to persuasion by the arguments of politicians unless they were present to deliver them in person, so it was thought desirable to take steps to enable it to read and write. As Robert Lowe put it, 'We must educate our masters.'

These were some of the influences that determined the rise and growth of popular education. They were influences which sought to use education for non-educational ends and they proposed the minimum of education that would serve those ends. Thus, the first Government grant in 1833 for the building of schools was £20,000 (England had a population of 20,000,000 at the time); by 1860—the Lowe era—it had risen to only £700,000. Also, as we have seen, grants for education were made dependent in amount upon value received for money. But the fact that they educated the workers to be 'useful' and spent as little on the job as they could decently contrive, did not mean that the governing class had no care for the things of the mind or were indifferent to the need of education for themselves. What it did mean was that the character and purpose of education varied with the social origin of the educatee. For, as Dr. Spencer assures us, 'at this time' (1860) 'and much later the old-fashioned "scholar" had a profound distrust of popular education. Nothing but the best and most thorough training in classical scholarship or in mathematics was to him worth while.' Education for the scholar, the governor, the adult man of the world was of one kind. It was education given largely for its own sake; it was of high quality and it produced many highly distinguished products. Education for the masses was of another kind; it was imposed by different motives, judged by different criteria and issued in different results. Above all, it was given on the cheap. Hence, the dinginess of popular education, the parsimonious grants, the large classes, the torn and dirty books, the lack of pens and desks, the ugly and ill-ventilated schools, the restricted space for playgrounds, the defective technical equipment and the under-paid teachers. Hence, too, the general public distaste for the subject of education and hence, finally, the fact that we are still, as we were in Disraeli's time, two nations whose citizens are moulded by the system of education to which each nation has respectively been subjected.

Chapter Two

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

The Three Ends of Education

Inevitably, at this stage there must be a chapter on the purposes of education and for two reasons:

(1) There is much disagreement and some confusion as to what its purposes are.

(2) All actions, arts, systems and organizations aim, as Aristotle remarks, at an end or good. We cook food in order to eat; build ships in order to sail them, practise medicine with a view to health, and so on. Unless its end is clear, an organization will be ineffective and its activities random, as the arrows of a man who does not know what his target is or where, will fly in every direction. The current abandonment of the nineteenth-century belief in progress arises largely from uncertainty as to what the end of man is. (The nineteenth century knew; wealth and comfort, it said, for the body in this world and everlasting happiness for the soul in the next. We, however, are doubtful on both heads.) In current controversies about education, its end or purpose is frequently represented as single; it is either this, men say, or that. I suggest that education has a number of ends of which three are outstanding:

(I) To equip a boy or girl to earn his or her living. (To avoid clumsiness, I shall refer hereafter only to boys, but the fact that I do so implies no sex distinction. I use boy to include both boy and girl, as the word man is used to cover mankind.)

(II) To equip him to play his part as the citizen of a democracy.

(III) To enable him to develop all the latent powers and faculties of his nature and so to enjoy a good life.

These aims are complementary not exclusive and a satisfactory education will seek to secure all three.

(I) Vocational Education

Of this end little need be said. I take it as axiomatic that a community should accept the obligation to equip its citizens

ABOUT EDUCATION

to earn their living. The discharge of this obligation means not only the giving of a good general education; it means also the provision of technical instruction in the mysteries of a particular trade, craft or profession, such as engineering, plumbing, medicine or the law. It is a paradox that as one approaches either end of the scale of employments, the degree of technical education that is necessary to qualify for entry and satisfactory performance of function diminishes. Thus, little technical instruction is required to enable a man to be a good road sweeper or office cleaner; little technical instruction to be a business executive or manager, the highly paid director of a company, or the holder of a position of power and esteem in the community as, for example, a Ministry of State, though in the last instance much is required in the way of *general* education.

In general, technical education is over-valued by a community desperately anxious to secure results for its expenditure. Take teaching, for example. Most teachers are educated for their profession at Teacher's Training Colleges, originally designed to secure at the minimum cost a regular supply of teachers for the multitude of children brought into the educational field by the Education Act of 1870.¹ At these Colleges instruction is given for two years in the method and art of teaching; in my view, wrongly; since any teacher who is worth his salt teaches by the light of nature. He does not, that is to say, require to be taught to teach. (It is interesting to observe that the rich do not think that the comparatively highly paid masters now teaching at public schools to whom they entrust the education of their sons require instruction in the art of teaching, nor does anybody expect a don, whose life is spent in lecturing and tutoring, to take courses in how to lecture and tutor.) Those who cannot teach naturally will never become good teachers, however hard they try and however much instruction they receive, and had better take up another profession. Hence, the more general education and the less technical that a teacher receives, the better. I return to this point later.²

¹ I dwell upon this at greater length in chap. iii, pp. 67, 68.

² See chap. iii, pp. 87, 88.

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

(II) Education for Citizenship

It is easier to point to the need which this should meet than to say in what it should consist. A survey undertaken by Mass Observation in 1937 into the voting habits of the population of a particular industrial area which was entitled 'Work Town' revealed the following. (The results of the survey were subsequently confirmed by some figures officially issued by the relevant authority.)

PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION ENTITLED TO VOTE WHO DID NOT IN FACT USE THEIR VOTE

	<i>At</i>	<i>At the Parliamentary</i>
<i>Municipal Elections</i>		<i>Election of 1935</i>
Upper Middle Class	37.9	33.3
Lower „ „	42.0	54.8
Working „ „	48.0	60.4

In the country as a whole the number of those who do not vote at any election, whether Parliamentary or Municipal, is about ten million. The ten million constitute the largest single party at Municipal elections and a very powerful 'third' party at Parliamentary elections.

The figures throw so clear a light upon the degree of political interest which animates the citizens of the mother of democracies that little additional comment is required. I venture, however, to draw attention to three points.

(1) *The Poor.* The most alarming figure is the 60.4 per cent non-voters among the working class. The figure is paralleled by a number of similar results obtained both in this country and in America. It is clear, moreover, that as one descends the social and economic ladders, political apathy increases, yet the working classes who, one would have supposed, must desire a change in the *status quo*, have the most to gain from political action and the most reason therefore for taking an interest in politics. It was observed in the course of the survey that the non- or the less-educated workers vote less than the more educated workers. (There are high voting figures for members of W.E.A. classes, Church Associations, members of

ABOUT EDUCATION

Craft Unions, and so on.) No wonder the upper classes have consistently opposed the education of the workers.

(2) *Women.* Some 85.8 per cent of women say they vote the same way as their husbands. This fact enables one to estimate the degree of political interest taken by women voters; I do not propose to soil it with comment.

(3) *Other Countries.* A table has been prepared giving corresponding figures for the closest comparable elections in other countries. It is as follows:

Percentage of population not using their vote, by class.

<i>Place</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Upper middle</i>	<i>Lower middle</i>	<i>Working class</i>
Prussia	1913	48.6	58.1	70.1
Stockholm	1920	18.0	29.8	31.9
Sweden	1928 (male)	15.3	24.3	30.6
Basle	1932	21.5	31.0	39.3
Illinois	1924	15	25	35

Only in Prussia thirty years ago is the English figure of 60.4 per cent of non-voters exceeded. Yet we are apt to regard ourselves as the most politically conscious people in the world and the oldest and most skilful practitioners of the arts of democracy.

It is obvious that this lack of interest is undesirable in citizens of a democracy who, if the theory of democracy is correct, possess or can potentially be made to possess as much knowledge as the holding of an informed opinion upon public affairs demands. The theory of democracy also pre-supposes that every adult citizen takes an interest in public affairs and wishes to exercise indirectly through his chosen representatives the various powers of government, to make laws and to administer the laws that have been made. That no ideal could be further from the facts even the most cursory inspection of the phenomenon of our national life affords melancholy evidence.

Items illustrative of Unfitness for Citizenship

As no more than a cursory inspection is possible, I propose to choose five illustrative items, all of which happen to have

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

come under my notice in the week in which this paragraph is written.

(a) I read in the daily paper that the M.O.I. is inquiring into the activities of an Advertising Agency which is responsible for a series of articles written with the object of building up the then existing Minister of Reconstruction, Lord Woolton, into a superman to whom the people of Britain will be well advised to entrust the supreme management of post-war affairs. The articles, appearing over the name of Mary Leigh, were written, we are told, for women readers. It was stated by one of the editors who printed the articles that Mary Leigh had done a considerable amount of broadcasting and that her purpose was 'to keep the feminine mind' clear of politics. It was with this object in view that a number of business men were giving her support and publicity. 'To keep the feminine mind clear of politics' is only an explicit statement of a purpose which usually remains implicit in a number of papers, more particularly, papers written for women. Sex-crime, murders, mothers, boy friends, woollies, knitting, baby foods, cosmetics, whether men like fat girls best, whether shorts enhance as well as enlarge the charms—these and a thousand other topics compete for the feminine interest; anything and everything in fact is permissible, provided it does not stimulate women to think about public affairs. Women have votes, have, in fact, more than half the votes which are cast in this country. Yet they have never been encouraged to take an interest in those affairs upon which the community bids them cast their vote.

(b) I read the following in a Report by Mass Observation, entitled, *The Journey Home*, compiled in 1943.

Twice a week the question is asked of a random street sample: 'What do you think of the news?' A large number of women regularly give answers such as:

'Well, I haven't heard it.'

'I never read the paper.'

'Well, I don't think the news is good, but I expect it will all come out O.K. in the end.'

Again, in answer to the question: 'Do you think there should be party politics in wartime or not?' one woman in five could not give any opinion, although only one man in thirteen had

ABOUT EDUCATION

not made up his mind. Again, in a northern by-election, only one woman in twenty had made up her mind about which way to vote, the others simply leaving the matter to their men-folk, with remarks like:

‘Oh, my husband sees to all that.’

(c) A friend, whose business it is to interview recruits mainly from industrial areas who want advice on family allowances and other matters, found that very few, less, he said, than one in ten, knew either the name of their M.P. or, if they belonged to a Trade Union, that of their Union representative.

(d) Two million copies of Old Moore’s Almanack were sold last year.

(e) The *Universe*, the leading Roman Catholic paper, carries the following announcement in double column and black type: ‘Russia will be converted to Christianity at the end of this war, Our Lady has promised in an authoritatively accepted statement made at Fatima the Portuguese shrine in 1917.’ The revelation was made during the third of six apparitions of Our Lady to three young children who were ‘closely and searchingly questioned after the apparitions by many people, including a number of famous ecclesiastical professors’.

Each of these five items seems to me to indicate a lack of education for citizenship in the audience for which they were intended and to which they were addressed.

Confessions of the Prime Minister and the Savings Campaign

I have deliberately chosen trivial examples, but the same effects may be witnessed in fields where the issues bear more directly upon human happiness and welfare. I have recently read in Mr. Churchill’s book *Aftermath*, how on Armistice Night, 11th November 1918 he was torn ‘between anxiety for the future and desire to help the fallen foe’. He and Mr. Lloyd George both, he says, knew that the popular *demands* of the time, the demand for hanging the Kaiser and the demand to make Germany pay had little or no bearing upon the real *needs* of the time; that while the former was a mere sop to the passions of the mob, the latter was economically impracticable or, if practicable, would have upon this country the reverse

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

effect to that which was hoped and anticipated. Nevertheless, Mr. Churchill explains, they gave way to popular clamour and talked platitudes, superficialities and falsehoods, because they wanted to win the election. Upon how many elections in the decades between the two wars might not the same comment be made. The battle cries round which they were ostensibly fought had no real bearing upon the issues which confronted the country. Consider, for example, the implications of the Zinovieff letter or the Post Office Savings Bank scare. There was, I suppose, scarcely an educated person who did not know that these were bogies deliberately dressed up to dish the opposition. Their effect was directly proportional to the ignorance of the electorate. The fact that each proved decisive in the election was a testimony to the need for education in citizenship.

As the war proceeds, evidences of the need for educating the people in public affairs accumulate. Consider, for example, the implications of the campaign to induce the public to save. The object is desirable, but the methods adopted to secure it would not, one would have hoped, impose upon a child. The purpose of promoting savings in wartime when government expenditure exceeds income is quite simply to prevent inflation. There is a shortage of goods; if the impact of high wages upon diminished supplies of commodities is not restricted, prices soar and the value of money drops. Therefore, it is in the interests of the public that the public should save instead of shopping. Not, one would have thought, very difficult to understand. . . . In fact, however, this is not the ground upon which saving is advocated. It is pretended that special merit is acquired by the purchase of interest bearing War Bonds or Certificates, although, in fact, it would be better from the point of view of the community that the money should be buried or lie idle in a stocking. During Warship Weeks, Spitfire Weeks and so on, it is argued that the number of ships or aeroplanes constructed depends upon the amount of savings invested in the purchase of Bonds or Certificates. I have even heard people go to the length of associating a particular ship or plane with the savings of a particular borough. In fact, however, the number of ships and aeroplanes built depends

ABOUT EDUCATION

upon the amount of labour and materials available; not, that is to say, upon the wages of the labourers or the cost of the materials. Nor do these have to be paid for out of savings, since in wartime the government simply creates what money is necessary without stint or limit.

That this kind of appeal should be necessary in a democracy is clearly undesirable. Either the public is not told the truth on the ground that it would be shocked, alarmed or indifferent, or it is told what is true but told that it is true for the wrong reasons, the assumption being that it would not understand the right ones.

The fact that this assumption is all too often justified points to the need for education in citizenship.

It will be not without interest to inquire a little more closely into the causes of this need, since as readers will, no doubt, be anxious to point out, it is not true that the public is without the means to inform itself of the affairs which concern it. The public can read and it reads the papers; the public can hear and it listens to the B.B.C. How, then, it may be asked, can the public be uneducated?

The Irony of Public Literacy

The Victorians were optimists in regard to the effects of education. Thus, John Stuart Mill tells us of his father, James Mill, that 'so complete was my father's reliance on the influence of reason over the minds of mankind, whenever it is allowed to reach them, that he felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing and if by means of a suffrage they were allowed to elect a legislature to give effect to the opinions they had adopted.'

'If the whole population were taught to read'! This desideratum of the elder Mill has now been achieved; with what result? Eighty years ago, when only a small proportion of the adult population could read, it paid the daily papers to print verbatim reports of Parliamentary proceedings. To-day it is often impossible to tell from a perusal of the popular press whether Parliament is sitting or not. The effects of public literacy

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

afford, indeed, a wry commentary upon the results of human aspiration. For centuries men fought that their fellow men might read; fought against every reactionary influence, the landlords, the clergy, the magistrates and the employers who feared the effects of popular literacy, foreseeing that in the words of a Mr. Giddy, President of the Royal Society under the name of Gilbert in 1807, 'it would enable the labouring classes to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity'.

Those who fought for popular enlightenment believed intensely in the power of ideas. They thought that truth would 'out' if it were given a chance. In this conviction they suffered exile and imprisonment, were transported, pilloried, flogged. At last their efforts succeeded and the result is the *News of the World* (circulation four million): 'The labouring classes', it turns out, want not 'seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity' but murders, mothers, rapers, adulterers, football pools and advertisements of medicines for the aches of the back and the disorders of the bladder.

Effects of the Popular Press

From some points of view, indeed, the result of the education that has been given to the people has been to make them not better citizens but worse. For one of these results has been to enable every agency that sees profit to itself in appealing to the credulity, exploiting the ignorance, exciting the cupidity or pandering to the love of sensation of the masses—'Amazing' say the popular papers; it is their favourite word—to enfeeble their minds, to debauch their emotions and vulgarize their tastes. An examination of the popular Sunday papers from this point of view would make interesting reading. It is an axiom with some who edit and many who write for these papers that nothing which excites thought, or stirs the deeper levels of the mind should be permitted to appear; also, nothing that might offend advertisers is permitted to appear. Since they are dependent for their financial success upon the maintenance of very large circulations, the Sunday papers must address their appeal to the highest common factors of

ABOUT EDUCATION

the interests of all readers. Now, the things that we all of us have in common are the dullest things about us; they are lust, fear and envy; they are also vanity, snobbery, inquisitiveness and ambition. And our common virtues? They are of the mildest: a touching optimism, a vague belief that good will triumph in the end, a disposition to think well of ourselves and fairly well of other people and a superficial resentment of such cruelty and injustice as are brought to our notice and which do not conduce manifestly to our advantage. These, I say, are the elements that mankind share in common and they stand, I insist, for the dullest things about us. When I am hungering for a beef steak or looking longingly after a pretty girl, my feelings are, I imagine, very much the same as those of a Hottentot, a navvy or a Nazi; when I am listening to a symphony, taking part in a discussion, or writing and thinking about this chapter they are I believe, different and, because I am an educated man, more valuable. Now it is that in them which makes people various which makes them interesting. Hence, the popular press which appeals to what is common to most people lacks interest and variety. It also increases the uniformity upon which it thrives since people's appetites and emotions conform to what they feed on and, if their fare is administered to them on the assumption that, broadly speaking, they all want the same things because at bottom human nature is the same, then that in them which is, in fact, the same will grow at the expense of that which is different.

The activities and adventures of the mind, the sensitivity to and interest in ideas which are a condition of civilization and upon which its continuance depends—these things are anathema to the popular press and almost unknown to its readers.

Thus, so far from the effects of education having increased the variety and interestingness of the human beings, who are exposed to it, they have made them more alike and, because more alike, less interesting. Giving the power to read without the ability to criticize what is read, popular education has enabled the press to pour down the feeding tubes of our minds the same mental aliment, with the result that men's thoughts, emotions, tastes and valuations are more alike to day than they

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

were a hundred years ago. And just as those who feed continuously upon tinned food dislike the taste of natural food, just as those who partake perpetually of stale fish cannot bear the taste of fresh—"Waiter let me have some sauce, I can taste this fish"—so those who have lived for long on the diet provided by the Sunday press become incapable of serious reading, profound emotion or independent thought. I shall never forget, though I cannot describe, the disastrous effect upon an audience consisting largely of American soldiers of a performance of *King Lear* at the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon.

And of the B.B.C.

The B.B.C. might have corrected these tendencies; in fact, it has enhanced them. The B.B.C. began with high hopes. It would enlighten as well as entertain the people. Vigorous talks were delivered on issues of importance by men who were not afraid to say, or prevented from saying what they thought. This youthful vigour has been dissipated, the idealism has evaporated, the pretensions to educate largely abandoned, while those who nourished the high hopes function as polite and disillusioned officials on a dead level of uninspired competence. You have only to hear them talk, to realize the degree of their frustration. To-day the B.B.C. is governed, so far as its general policy is concerned, by the time-honoured Civil Service precept 'Give peace in our time, O Lord'. This, whatever may be its virtues as the guiding principle of a Government department whose function is the administration of Acts of Parliament, is deadly to an organization whose purpose should be in part to stimulate, in part to enlighten the public mind. For the public mind, if it is to be stimulated, demands the spur of provocation; if enlightened, the practice of controversy. But the B.B.C. has no fire in its belly; it shuns provocation like the plague and eschews controversy—real controversy that is to say, not sham—like the devil, its dominating objective throughout being to avoid a row, as symbolized by a question in Parliament. Thought is formed and guided by the vigorous advocacy of different points of view, irrespective of their truth or falsehood. Yet we look to the radio in vain for any vigorous expression of strongly held opinions. Where the canvas of controversy

ABOUT EDUCATION

should be painted—overpainted if you will—in blacks and whites, the B.B.C. give us only a monochrome of grey. The resultant effect upon the public mind is harmful in a number of ways.

The Emasculation of Controversy .

First, able men with brilliant minds are taken to the microphone but only when the fire of their passion has been politely damped. The world is as full of fools and scoundrels as it always has been, but whatever is said must not offend the scoundrels or provoke the fools.

Now the vigorous expression of strongly held opinion always offends somebody. Therefore, it is concluded, there must be no vigorous expression of strongly held opinion. The B.B.C., in fact, proceeds upon the assumption that nothing must be said over the microphone which could produce a ripple of disagreement in the still waters of the minds of Tory maiden aunts born a century ago—for such do not die—in the closes of Cathedral towns. This policy of intellectual appeasement pursued over years enervates the public mind. When Quintin Hogg once attacked me with feeling on a Brains Trust, calling me an old man whose views had helped to bring on this war in the past and, if persisted in, would bring on another war in the future, there was the devil of a fuss. The B.B.C. was deluged with protests and I received a couple of hundred letters from soft-hearted persons anxious to express their sympathy with the victim of Mr. Hogg's unprovoked attack. For my part, I was unable to see what the fuss was about. Why shouldn't a man say what he thinks, and say it as forcibly as he thinks it? It was only because the B.B.C. had for so long soothed our ears with radio syrup, administered to us by decorous voices inculcating platitudes with Oxford accents, that people were shocked.

They were shocked more by surprise than by Mr. Hogg.

They would not have been shocked in the nineteenth century. I have just been reading the biography of O'Connell who never hesitated when he differed from a noble Lord to describe him as 'a bloated buffoon'. Listen to him on Disraeli: 'He is a liar in action and in words. . . . He is a disgrace to his species. . . . He is the most degraded of his species and his

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

kind; and England is degraded in tolerating or having upon the face of her society a miscreant of his abominable, foul and atrocious nature. . . . He possesses just the qualities of the impudent thief who died upon the Cross, whose name I verily believe must have been Disraeli.' In comparison with O'Connell, Hogg was mild.

The effect of continual doses of radio syrup is not dissimilar from that of chloroform. When everything is devoted to convincing people that, although we are not quite living in the best of all possible worlds, yet we shall be living there very soon, that, in fact, Utopia is just round the corner, they feel that vigorous effort is unnecessary. All that is necessary is that we should be nice to one another, work hard, say our prayers, and not worry, and this while men are killing one another by the hundred thousand, while murder, torture and rape stalk the world as they have not done these four hundred years and our civilization hangs visibly upon the brink of collapse. . . .

Counter-Attack on Hogg

And here I would like to take the opportunity of counter-attacking my old antagonist, Hogg.

During the winter in which this chapter is written, a series of talks has been in progress on 'The World We Want'. Important persons, including Sir William Beveridge and Lord Keynes, have taken part in these talks. The first one, however, consisted of fragments of voices, bits and pieces of what people are saying all over the country, in a variety of accents. There was no hint of bitterness, no suggestion of discontent, and no reference to any political party—surprising this, since after all political parties are the accredited agents for precipitating social change. The commentary was by Quintin Hogg.

Any animadversion upon the omission of politics? None at all. Any suggestion that passions could run high? Any proposals for removing this abuse, or righting that wrong; any expression of dissatisfaction of any kind with any thing? None of these things. Hogg, who had roared so loudly at me, cooed as gently as a dove. 'We all wanted a new world after the war; of course we did. We even dared to hope that we might get it.

ABOUT EDUCATION

We were right to be so greatly daring, for we deserved it. But we must remember that there were serious practical difficulties. Rome was not built in a day; the price of progress is self-sacrifice . . . and so on and so on. As the expressions of a stolid complacency succeeded one another with a dreadful regularity to produce an effect of uniform flatness, I wondered what had happened to the fire in Hogg. Damped down by the B.B.C., he could, alas, only add to the draughts of syrup.

Emasculation of the Brains Trust

It was because its members might shake equanimity or disturb complacency that the Brains Trust was not after its first year allowed to answer questions that touch the crucial issues of our time. In the early days when the Trust was comparatively obscure, we answered questions on religion and politics and answered them as we chose. Questions on these topics gradually disappeared. Presently religion dropped out altogether—under pressure, the B.B.C. made a clean breast of this—and the questions on politics grew fewer, although the B.B.C. was never brought to admit that there was a virtual ban on political discussion. Finally, a point was reached at which not even the mildest of political questions could be ventured upon. Thus, to cite a couple of examples, where dozens could be given that came within my own experience, the Brains Trust was not allowed to answer the questions, 'What are the causes of anti-Semitism?'; 'What is the difference between a Conservative, a Liberal, a Socialist and a Communist?' These questions were both asked by the public, selected by the producer and deleted by the authorities—somebody, I suppose, might have inserted a drop of wormwood in the soothing syrup in the course of answering them. Meanwhile, the B.B.C. was giving itself marks for permitting on the Brains Trust 'free discussion'.

Mill's arguments for Liberty of Discussion

Secondly, the very nature and function of controversy tend to be obscured. John Stuart Mill, in his *Essay on Liberty*, admirably puts the case for freedom to state every conceivable point of view with as much vigour as the speaker can command. He

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

considers the arguments that are put forward for the suppression or modification of opinion; every one of them might well have been used and most of them have, in fact, been used by the B.B.C. Persons in authority, Mill points out, usually defend themselves by saying, (i) We could not tell at the time whether this that was being advocated was right or wrong, but it seemed to us to be wrong, and because wrong, harmful. (ii) We are surely right to forbid the propagation of harmful opinions. (iii) Admittedly we can never be quite sure what is harmful and what is not, and it seems to be possible that in this case we may have made a mistake. But (iv) this only means that our judgment, being human, is fallible; this we admit, but the possible fallibility of our judgment is no ground for not exercising it. (v) Being in authority, we have to act, and in order to do so we must assume that our opinions, which are also the received opinions of the populace, are true. To this Mill answers: 'There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right.' In other words, it is only if you allow popularly received opinions to be questioned and disputed from every point of view that you are entitled to assume them to be true. If you are not entitled to assume them to be true, you have no ground for suppressing the opinions which challenge them.

If the novel opinion is false, there is still no ground in public utility for its suppression. Received opinion—the fact is, alas, too obvious—is scarcely ever entirely true. But, even if it is, nobody can be sure that it is, unless every opportunity has been given to those who wish to challenge it, unless this opportunity has been widely used and the resultant challenge has failed to shake it. Now truth is, no doubt, a good; but truth which is recognized to be such, which, in fact, is *known* to be true, is a greater good.

If, as is usually the case, the unorthodox opinion is partly

ABOUT EDUCATION

true and partly false, in which event it shares in truth with the accepted opinion, the accepted opinion, which, on this assumption, embodies some truth, will be found to express one aspect of it only. The unorthodox opinion will then almost certainly stress that aspect of truth which the received opinions fails to embody. Thus one-sided popular truth will be supplemented by one-sided novel truth. In such a situation, while both partial truths may justly claim the right of popular ventilation, the novel, minority opinion has a special right to be heard, since this is the one 'which for the time being represents the neglected interests'.

• The Fair-mindedness of the B.B.C.

To all this the B.B.C. has a reply. 'We do', it runs in effect, 'allow rival opinions to be canvassed; in fact, we do it so regularly that we never permit one side of a case to be stated without bringing in somebody to put the other side. If a group discusses any controversial question in one of our studios, you will find that a Left-Wing Conservative is always balanced by a Right-Wing Socialist.' This is true. On the Brains Trust, in the days when we were allowed to discuss religion, a priest had always to be present, (the assumption being, apparently, that laymen being presumed to be critical of religion, must be counterbalanced by a professional) while one of the reasons for the soft pedalling of the discussion of political questions was, I suspect, that no Right-Wing speaker could be found who was sufficiently ingenious and articulate convincingly to answer the contentions from the Left which poured so multitudinously into the microphone.

The B.B.C. strives, in short, to keep a balance. Yes, but the balance is so kept as to produce upon the popular mind the impression that to every contention there is an adequate answer, that no opinion is either more or less true than its opposite, and that there are no convincing reasons for any course of action whatsoever. This result is achieved by the mildness of the disputants and the moderation with which their points of view are urged. No extreme view is ever advocated with a conviction that communicates itself to the listener. Such

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

differences of opinion as are disclosed are canvassed in the atmosphere appropriate to the University lecture room, with never the hint of a suggestion that there are vital matters, for example, those at issue between communist and fascist, between pacifist, federalist and supporter of the League of Nations, between internationalist and nationalist, upon whose right determination the future of civilization depends.

Let us hear no extreme views, says the B.B.C. It is 'strange' says Mill 'that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion but object to their being "pushed to an extreme"; not seeing that unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case.' In a word, and the word shall again be Mill's, the B.B.C.'s policy is 'a convenient plan for having peace in the intellectual world and keeping all things going on therein very much as they have already'.

Mill's comment is, 'the price paid for this sort of intellectual pacification, is the sacrifice of the entire moral courage of the human mind'.

Education for Citizenship, a Condition of Democracy

The bearing of all this upon the question of education for citizenship is not obscure. The case for giving such education is and always has been strong, (1) because the modern world is complex and the issues upon which the affairs of nations turn hard to understand; (2) because an alert and informed body of public opinion is a condition of democracy's effective working; (3) because it is for democracy that we fight.

Always strong, the case is strengthened by the coming into existence of a literate public, strengthened still further by the addition of a listening public. Through newspapers and the wireless people are subjected to a continual stream of influence designed to establish their opinions, mould their tastes and form their outlooks.

This subjection of the public mind to the influences of the written and the spoken word is a comparatively new thing in human history. Nor can the effects of the popular press, the film and the radio be easily under-estimated. The importance of

ABOUT EDUCATION

education for citizenship is to be measured by its ability to enable the citizen to sift and, if necessary, to resist these influences.

Failing such education, citizens become raw material for manipulation by commercial pirates and domination by political adventurers. For citizens without education are from the political point of view not men but sheep, ready to flock into the appropriate pen at the voice of the shepherd crying the latest political scare or the advertiser selling the latest popular stunt. It is easy to understand why forces hostile to democracy should object to education for citizenship.

The main effect of education as it is given to-day upon children who leave school at fourteen is to give the power to read without the ability to criticize what is read. This is to open the ears to the voice of reason, without enabling the hearer to close them against the cries and catchwords of the hour, with the result that the voice of reason being small is drowned.

Of what Education in Citizenship should consist

If this second purpose of education be admitted, how is it to be achieved? What, in other words, should be taught with a view to the education of citizens?

This question I propose to excuse myself from trying to answer. The formal excuse is that this book is not ostensibly concerned with the content of education; the real one is that I do not pretend to know, even in the most general way, what the answer is.

Some things, of course, are obvious. The teaching of history, and particularly of modern history, so that the child should know how the society in which he grows up has come to be what it is. The teaching of some constitutional theory, so that he knows in broad outline how it is governed and how his governors are elected. The structure of local as well as of national government should also be made familiar to him. To these may be added the teaching of biology, so that he knows something of the history of life on this planet and of elementary physiology, so that he is made free of the main facts, including the sexual facts, relating to the working of his own body; the teaching of geography, so that he may be acquainted with the

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

configuration of the planet on which he lives, the grouping of its seas and continents; and the teaching of international affairs so that in addition to a physical, he may carry at the back of his mind a political map of the modern world.

In an adequate treatment of the subject questions of method and manner would also be touched upon. What concerns us in the present context is that the teacher should teach, not as one conveying truths which are sacrosanct, but as one imparting information much of which is questionable, or may, at least, be questioned. Small children are by nature inquisitive and sceptical. The effect of much teaching is to overlay these original impulses and to convert the inquisitive questioning child into the passive recipient of information. This is particularly unfortunate if *citizens* are to be educated. When history is taught, it should be so taught as to provoke, even to encourage the question, 'How do you know?'; when legislation is referred to, the teacher should so present his material as to provoke in the child the question, 'To whose advantage was it that this particular Act should have been passed?'; 'Who stood to gain from this movement of public opinion?'. The teacher should on occasion canvass the opinion of children without necessarily pronouncing his own.

The result to be aimed at is that when reading his newspaper, the modern citizen should not view the news that it contains as so many dispersed and unrelated gobbets of fact, or regard the events which it describes as bolts from an unknown blue; but should be able to fit news and events into a framework existing ready made for their accommodation. It should be the business of the educator to provide this framework. Education should also seek to give the democratic citizen a rudimentary notion of the rules for discussion and debate and to instruct him in the procedure for the conduct of a meeting. He should know what a resolution is and what an amendment; he should learn the principles of relevance, how to argue and how not to argue and, in particular, that he should never argue about facts. . . . But here I pull myself up short, for this, I see, is a counsel of perfection. Indeed throughout I am, it is obvious, treating only of the ideal. These, I repeat, are the results which an education for citizenship, ideally conceived and carried out,

ABOUT EDUCATION

should achieve, but the question how far and by what methods they may be achievable I must excuse myself from answering. Nevertheless, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of surmising that, if even the most elementary instruction on these lines had been given for only one day a week at the Continuation Schools contemplated, but not operated,¹ under the Fisher Act of 1918, the degree of public interest in and information about affairs which might have been expected to result, would have been sufficient to save us from the worst follies of the pre-war years, from the elections fought and won on such issues as Hang the Kaiser, the Zinovieff Letter, and the Post Office Savings Bank scare and a foreign policy which betrayed the League, tolerated the rise of Fascism and the rearmament of Germany, connived at the farce of non-intervention in Spain, and played no small part in producing the situation which culminated in the war of 1939.

(III) Education for Living

The British Love of Reading

Illustrations, if apt, have the value of symbols; they stand for a whole area of fact which they typify. Having begun the last with one illustration, I venture to introduce the present section with two more. One is in the form of a report on a General Knowledge Questionnaire issued by Mass Observation to all non-commissioned ranks in a certain A.A. Brigade which included over five thousand men and women. I select the following from the replies tabled in the report.

Eight out of ten were unable to name a Shakespeare play. Longfellow was looked upon as the best known 'English poet'.

Many seemed to consider R. L. Stevenson as one of our greatest poets.

Einstein and Epstein were synonymous in every third person's mind.

Only one in ten attempted to name any great Italian, German, Dutch or French artist.

Noel Coward was given as a great British composer by one

¹ With the one splendid exception of Rugby.

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

person in eleven. Other answers included Handel, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Strauss and Beethoven, especially Beethoven.

Only one girl in three knew the answer to 'How many square feet in a square yard?' Answers varied from 3 to 440.

Matriculation was considered to be a branch of mathematics by one person in twelve.

I take the second illustration from my own experience. I am in a wartime train travelling from Edinburgh to London. It is a nine hours' journey at the best of times and the train is two hours late. It is packed with soldiers. They sit four a side in the compartments and crowd the corridors; they have long exhausted the meagre resources of one another's conversation; they are tired of looking out of the window. What, then, are they doing? Nothing at all; they are just sitting, sitting hour after hour, bored and low with their hands hanging between their knees and their heads dropping on their chests—bodies occupying space. And to not one in a hundred does it occur to relieve their boredom by reading a book. I say literally, 'to not one in a hundred' for, growing interested in the significance of the phenomenon, I went through the train counting. I counted men of all ranks, counted, that is to say, officers as well as men, and I reached number one hundred and four before I came upon my first book-reader, and he was reading *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* by James Hadley Chase.

These two illustrations seem to me to be symbolical. The first symbolizes a lack of the kind of factual knowledge which indicates an informed mind; the second, the effects of possessing an uninformed mind. I will try to indicate the function which education performs in remedying the lack and obviating the effects.

Recipe for Growth to Full Stature

Education is a device for helping a man to grow to his full stature. It enables him to realize his nature both mentally and spiritually and in that realization to become all that he has it in him to be. It is to the child what perfect gardening is to the tree, a help so to grow that it may develop its own personality. A good gardener helps each plant to put forth that essential quality of its own that differentiates it from all other plants

ABOUT EDUCATION

and makes it a thing of use and beauty in the world. The good educator performs a similar office for the human being. But most of us cannot afford the services of a good educator with the result that we go through life with faculties undeveloped and potentialities unrealized, merely because the community has been too mean to give us the necessary opportunities for mental growth. And so, to most of us, the world seems as trite and obvious as it did to the soldiers in the train; our habitation is a prison whose walls are brute facts from which the spirit lacks the wings of knowledge to escape.

For to the man of trained faculties and developed tastes the world becomes literally a larger place, larger and more exciting. He is able to see in it more beauty, more variety, more scope for his sympathy and understanding than he saw before. So far as the understanding of the universe is concerned, while education diminishes his certainty of what is, it widens his sense of the possibilities of what may be and transforms the world from a humdrum scene of workshop, factory and office to a universe of mystery and a treasure house of beauty.

Now this enlargement of outlook, this enrichment of faculty are not only valuable in themselves to the individual whom they distinguish; they are also important to the community in its citizens. Their social importance is twofold.

(1) *Waste of material.* Our society now fails to make the best use of its human resources. In this respect it is like every other society that has ever existed. All have tended to choose their great men from rather less than one-twentieth of their numbers. To the other nineteen-twentieths has never come that chance of self-development which would have enabled their potential greatness, if it existed, to have become manifest. Every now and then a genius breaks through, warped and embittered by the struggle for recognition. But how many waste their lives in ignorance of their powers? We cannot, I submit, afford this waste of our material. Modern society needs all the talents of all its members to keep it from the rocks and it has no right arbitrarily to limit the area from which it is prepared to enlist them. I know no reason why ability should be limited to that stratum of the population which we call the middle and upper classes.

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

(2) *Ignorance of the art of living.* Most of us do not know how to use our leisure. The fact was of no importance in a community in which most people worked so hard, worked so long and were so poor that they had no leisure to use and no money to spend on it, if they had had the leisure.

But unless our hopes for the post-war world are once again frustrated, such a community will not recur. Most of us have been led to expect longer holidays in the world after the war. We have also been led to expect that we shall be paid while we enjoy them. Are we, then, to be thrown helpless upon our native resources for amusement? If we are, we shall, I fear, spend our time to no better effect than the soldiers in the train.

Concepts of Money Spending and Matter Moving

Taken by and large we are as a community singularly ignorant of those ends in the pursuit of which good living consists. How could we be expected to know much of the art of living, when we spend four-fifths of our waking life in getting the means to make life possible? To the art of living, the most important of all the arts, we bring tired minds and jaded energies and the fag ends of days devoted to acquiring the wherewithal to live. It is not surprising that when we go for a holiday with leisure for living, we know so little how to use it that most of us demand nothing better at the end of our fortnight than that we should be allowed to go back to work.

When having been freed by fortune or our own successful efforts to live as we please, we set about practising the art of life, our thoughts centre in two concepts, the concept of the expenditure of money and the concept of the movement of matter. The concept of the expenditure of money means that we pay somebody else to do for us the entertaining that we cannot do for ourselves, and as we insert our coins in metal slots, crowd struggling through clicking turnstiles, or sit in the dark to watch photographs speak and sing, we indirectly confess our own bankruptcy in the art of life. The concept that centres upon the movement of matter relates partly to the movement of our own, partly to that of inanimate bodies. Before the war the movement of our own bodies was treated

ABOUT EDUCATION

as an end and valued for its own sake. A generation grew up which thought that any place was better than the one in which it happened to be and would accordingly move heaven and earth in order to transport itself to some other place, pub, club, village or 'resort' without the faintest notion of what to do with itself when it had got there. Provided that one moved in the car, it mattered very little whether one moved and, as the countryside became increasingly victimized by a generation which, unable to create beauty for itself, could not preserve the beauty which had been bequeathed to it by a more gracious past, England was being fast transformed into a land in which the facilities for movement from place to place increased in proportion as the desirability of the places to which one moved diminished.

Movement was also accounted a good in inanimate bodies, especially if they were round, and to hit, push, whack or kick round bits of matter in the right directions, at the right speeds and at the right moments with mallets, clubs, racquets, bats, sticks or boots, exemplified for many the concept of the good life—to do these things and to watch others doing them.

These tendencies could be seen at the peak of their development in the retired business man who, having made his pile, retired after thirty years in harness to enjoy his gains. How well we remember him, that obese figure wandering disconsolately through the lounges of hotels, trying, with what lack of success, to impose upon himself the belief that he was enjoying himself by dancing, making unconvinced and unconvincing love, shooting half-blinded pigeons, or grilling his body like a steak on the beaches of the Riviera in the desperate endeavour to keep it up with the young. Turning in disgust from these amusements, he would take to some arduous or laborious pursuit such as mountain climbing or desert exploring, in which he could only persuade other people to accompany him by bribing them with enormous salaries and finally retire to his desk to make money that he did not want in despair of finding life tolerable without the hard labour to which he had been accustomed. His case is an extreme illustration of an ignorance of the ends of life which persists in spite of, perhaps because of, our increasing mastery of means. 'Surely,' says Hazlitt, 'life if

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

it be not long is tedious, since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time.'

Education to Repair the Deficiencies of the Natural Man

Now this inability to tolerate our leisure without either paying money or moving matter is in fact the result of our illiberal education, that is to say, of an education mainly devoted to conferring proficiency in a specialized craft, science or profession. This, precisely because it is a specialist education, narrows a man's outlook, restricts the development of taste and faculty and gives a mastery of the instruments of the good life without any understanding of its nature. It fails, therefore, to provide a man with a perspective for living, or a scale of values by reference to which the worth of different kinds of activity can be measured and assessed. Technical education and the avocations to which it leads, more particularly those of the business man, the technician, the engineer and the mechanic inevitably set their stamp upon the personality. A 'liberal' education, both Aristotle and Plato would have agreed, is one which, as the name suggests, makes a man free, free both of the cravings of the unsatisfied body, which demand that the senses be titillated, and of the solicitations of the empty mind which demand that it should be kept occupied. Now to be in bondage to the need for action or entertainment to relieve our boredom, is only one degree more tolerable than to be in servitude to the solicitations of the senses to relieve our cravings. It is by education that these disabilities can be removed, education directed to conferring some degree of competence in the art of life. Such education should aim at the training of the intellect, the senses and the emotions.

(a) The Training of the Intellect

At the training of the intellect because, if this is to grow to its full stature, it requires to be both disciplined and fertilized. It is a fallacy to suppose that learning comes easily and naturally to human beings. Learning what one wants to know is, no doubt, natural enough but there is precious little that the

ABOUT EDUCATION

child *does* want to know that is of value to him later on, and learning what one does not want to know is repugnant. Yet unless the intellect has learnt the technique of mastering what is difficult or dull, it cannot engage in those pursuits, in disinterested inquiry, in speculation, in contemplation, in the satisfaction of curiosity and the joy of mental adventure, in which the life of the mind consists. We recognize that difficult and frightening things like learning irregular verbs or learning to swim or to ride are best mastered in our early years, knowing that although they are difficult and frightening then, they will be still more later on when habits are formed and tastes moulded. It follows that the subduing of the intellect to the higher labours of intellectual effort such as are involved in the right arrangement of material, the perception of relevance, the forming of perspectives, the siftings of evidence, the following of chains of reasoning, the seeing of connections and the reaching of results should be accomplished early. It is right that the multiplication table should be learnt, that 'repetition' should be committed to memory, that the irregular verbs in all their confusing parts should be mastered not because these things are interesting and can hold the intellect, but because they are not and the intellect must be trained to hold them.

(b) The Training of the Senses

It should aim at the training of the senses, because the young are not naturally prone to love what is beautiful and seemly. It is, I suppose, a by-product of the decline in the belief in original sin that we should have come to believe that the young are born with the capacity for recognizing the beautiful and loving it when recognized. Just as children, whom the Victorians regarded as limbs of Satan, are now considered to be by nature virtuous, albeit corrupted by evil environments—by the parents who need enlightening, the nurses who require psycho-analysing and so on—so are they also thought to be by nature beauty-lovers and even beauty-creators. Our natural tastes, in other words, are for the good, the true and the beautiful and they have only to be allowed to 'rip', undistracted by the trivialities and uncorrupted by the artificialities of bourgeois, capitalist society, and we shall all grow into saints, sages and artists.

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

These beliefs are illusions. The natural tastes of the young are, taking them by and large, bad and for what is bad. Look at the books they read, the pictures that engage their attention, the 'music' in which they revel. Take a child as I once did on board ship up the Gulf of Corinth with the sun declining in a blaze of beauty behind the mountains of Epirus and it will clamour to be allowed to go below and look at the engines. A taste for music and mathematics the young do sometimes manifest early in life, evidence, perhaps, that the subject matter with which music and mathematics deal is not of this world, but derives its sources from another—nobody has ever explored the implications of the curious fact that the three spheres of the infant prodigy and the only three, are music, mathematics and chess. Is it, perhaps, that the young, having more recently come from another world, have not yet wholly forgotten what they knew there? But with most of us the memories that we bring with us into this world quickly fade and the child with a streak of genius quickly turns into the commonplace schoolboy, interested in machines and the way things work. Not only are his tastes bad, but unless they are trained they will remain bad, and the schoolboy will grow into the garage hand or the engineer, still interested in machines and the way things work, his conception of beauty formed and bounded by the products of Hollywood, of literature and drama by the thriller and the comic strip, of music by the crooner and the Wurlitzer organ, and of the right exercise of the mind by the crossword puzzle and the football pool. The eighteenth century took all this for granted. Listen, for example, to Sir Joshua Reynolds: 'Taste does not come by chance of nature; it is a long and laborious business to acquire it. It is the lowest style only of arts, whether of painting, poetry or music, that may be said in the vulgar sense to be naturally pleasing.'

Now it is very difficult to state the case for art even to those who have enjoyed aesthetic experience and realized its significance. It is almost impossible to state it in such a way as to carry weight with those who have not. You cannot bring a blind man to understand the nature of colour; or the cat who looks at the chessboard to grasp the point of your opening. Nor, until their eyes are opened by aesthetic experience which they have

ABOUT EDUCATION

themselves enjoyed, will those who are devoid of it understand what it is that occasions the fuss. For, to them, it will seem a fuss, a fuss about nothing and a snobbish fuss at that. Hence, the need for the education of the senses. The case for the cultivation of the sense of beauty stands or falls with the belief that if the soul is placed in a gracious environment among harmonious sights and sounds, it will, as Plato insists, respond to them, growing in time to reflect its environment and becoming gracious and shapely in its turn. Such an environment is not provided by the material surface of our civilization. Our towns are ugly and our schools reflect their ugliness. Hence, the need to give the young training in and to make them familiar with the things that are beautiful, in the hope that what begins as an experiment will end as an experience.

That the experience is worth while in and for itself, all who have enjoyed it will confirm. But not the least valuable of its features is that it grows with what it feeds on. Other desires perish with their gratification, but the taste for beauty, whether in art or nature, expands with the practice of its exercise. It does not stale but as we grow older becomes more not less fruitful of delight. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The same is true of knowledge. So long as the mind of man remains what it is, it will delight in exploring the limitless field of reality, simply because it wishes to know what manner of universe this is in which it dwells. Thus he who learns to love beauty and truth in all the forms of their manifestation is equipped with a faculty of gratification which will yield increasing and not diminishing returns. For him are opened avenues of interest and enjoyment along which he may walk all the years of his life, and whose attractions grow as the years decline.

(c) The Training of Emotions

It should aim at the training of the emotions, because what we bring with us into the world is not a character, but the raw material of a character. Our natural inheritance of human desire, impulse and emotion, Aristotle taught, is neither good nor bad. What it becomes will depend upon the ends to which impulse, desire and emotion are directed. Thus, a naturally

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

hot temper can be trained to a righteous indignation at cruelty and injustice or to a defiance of all authority. Right living is living in accordance with a rule, a rule, which reason prescribes. Aristotle, it may be remembered, points out that the young cannot be expected to perceive this rule for themselves, since in morals, as in art, the perception of what is good comes only as a result of practice and experience. Therefore, a boy must be trained to perform right acts by the exercise of authority and through the influence of tradition, before he can realize why they are right, or even that they are right.

The effect of such training is to convert a tendency to act in accordance with the impulse of the moment into action in accordance with rule and in pursuance of purpose. When the habit of so acting has been formed, and not until it has been formed, the intellect may perceive for itself the rightness of the way of life which hitherto has been followed in obedience to authority, so that while under the influence of tradition he has known only *that* so and so is right, he will come to see *why* it is right.

Hence, Aristotle insists that the virtues of character must precede those of intellect. The former can be produced by training, the latter may be expected to develop spontaneously as the result of the practise of the former. The aim of education is to make the pupil like and desire what he ought. If it is successful, he will end by choosing for himself what he begins by doing in obedience to the authority of others.

The Christian Doctrine of Original Sin

Christianity goes further. The doctrine of original sin stigmatizes many of the natural promptings of our nature as evil. For we do not like and desire what we ought; we like to dominate, we desire to hurt, we like to monopolize, we desire to possess what attracts us and to dispossess its rightful owner. We are filled with vanity, priding ourselves upon ourselves and refusing to humble ourselves before others. Self-centred and other-despising, we are blindly resentful of any interference with the satisfaction of our desires. How the young yell, how they rage, how they hate! By what method are we to dominate

ABOUT EDUCATION

this distressful natural inheritance of ours? Plato answered by the rule of reason. But reason is powerless to subdue the mob of clamorous appetites, unless she can enlist the emotions in her aid. Hence, the need for training what Plato called the second or 'spirited' part of the soul to collaborate with reason in the control of the passions, and to dominate the many impulses in the service of those ends which reason approves. The emotions, then, must be trained since the little human animal will not of himself feel liking and disgust for those things which are respectively likeable and disgraceful. Hence, the famous definition in the Republic of the well-educated youth as one who 'would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man, or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart'. It is to this end that the emotions must be trained.

These three trainings, the training of the intellect, of the senses and of the emotions, are necessary to fit a man to lead a good life. I have urged my case on the severely practical plane, indicating the respects in which education is useful, useful, that is to say, in the widest sense as conferring skill in the art of living. I venture to add one further consideration of a less utilitarian order.

The Right of Development

It seems to me that everything that lives has a right to develop the characteristics appropriate to its kind. I do not know how I could defend this belief, if it were questioned. I can only say that I see it to be true. In this sense, I suppose, it is a faith, a faith being defined as a belief for which no sufficient reason can be given but which nevertheless we know to be true. I see, too, that in other spheres we act upon its acceptance. I have already referred to the good gardener not as one who imposes upon tree or plant characteristics that do not naturally belong to it, but as one who helps it to put forth the natural and distinctive qualities of its kind. We recognize that in order that the gardener may perform this office two things are necessary.

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

First, the tree must not be cramped or distorted; secondly, it must be encouraged. Transfer the analogy to the development of personality and we may say that the human organism also demands the satisfaction of two conditions, if it is to develop all the potential resources of its being and to become completely itself. First, it must not be cramped, secondly it must be nurtured.

Conditions of Human Development

The satisfaction of the first requirement we know under the name of liberty, recognizing that in order that a man may grow to his full stature, in order that he may achieve a society which is not savage but civilized, he must be free to think, to act, to create. Freedom is like health or air, something that we miss only in its absence. But its denial is a denial of all that makes life worth living, so that the spirit of the prisoner cries out for liberty and again for liberty as the lungs of a man who is choking cry out for air; liberty, indeed, is the air of the spirit.

But liberty is not enough; there is also nurture, nurture which is directed to bringing out those aspects of our nature which are distinctive of our species. What are they? As, in my opinion, one of the cardinal mistakes of our time consists in the wrong answers that by implication are given to this question, I venture to answer it in some little detail.

The Distinctive Characteristics of Mankind

In what, then, I ask, do men differ from and excel the beasts? In swiftness or ferocity? The deer and the lion leave us far behind. In size and strength we must give way to the elephant and the whale; sheep are more gentle, nightingales more melodious, tortoises longer-lived, bees more co-operative, beavers more diligent. The ants run the totalitarian State much better than any Fascist. The truth is that our bodies are feeble and ill-adapted to survival; they are the prey of innumerable diseases; their enormous complexity means that they can go wrong in a vast number of different ways, while so poorly are they equipped against the vagaries of the climate, that it is only by clothing ourselves in the skins of other

ABOUT EDUCATION

animals that we can survive. Hence, to pride ourselves on any of the qualities I have mentioned, is to pride ourselves on the possession of attributes in respect of which the animals exceed us. Wherein, then, does our distinction, which is also, as we like to believe, our superiority, lie? The answer is, I suggest, that it lies in three things.

The first of these is our reason. Man, said Aristotle, is primarily a reasoning animal. He has, in other words, a mind which can reflect, discover causes, find reasons why, probe the secrets of nature, plan the future and meditate upon the purposes of life. Reasoning is broadly of two kinds. First, there is theoretical reasoning. Man is moved by curiosity and has a disinterested desire to *know* simply for knowledge's sake. The outcome of this desire is science, mathematics, philosophy, history, is in fact, the whole body of knowledge which constitutes our inheritance from the past and which moulds the mind of the present. Secondly, there is the reasoning which we perform in order to secure practical results. Applying the conclusions of theory to the practice of living, man has transformed his world, changing his environment more completely in the last hundred and fifty years than throughout the whole of the preceding two thousand.

Secondly, there are morals. Everything in nature except man acts as it does because it is its nature so to act. It is, therefore, pointless to argue whether it is right to act as it does; pointless to exhort it to act differently. We do not say of a stone that it ought to go uphill, or blame a tiger for tearing its prey. When, however, we consider a human being, we can say not only 'this is what he is like', but also, 'that is what he ought to be like'. Man, in other words, and man alone, can be judged morally. What is the reason for this distinction between man and nature? It is to be found in the fact that man has a sense of right and wrong, so that, whatever he may in fact do, we recognize that he ought to do what is right and eschew what is wrong; we recognize also that whatever he may in fact do, he is *free* to do what is right and eschew what is wrong. Man is thus set apart from everything else in nature by virtue of the fact that he is a free moral agent. Many would attribute this unique moral nature of man to the fact that he possesses or is

THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

an immortal soul made in the image of his Creator. It is not, however, necessary to add this conclusion in order to recognize that, just as man has a reason in virtue of which he desires and achieves knowledge, so he has a moral faculty in virtue of which he desires the good and strives after what he takes to be right.

Is there any other characteristic which is distinctive of the human species? It seems to me that there is, and that it is to be found in man's sense of beauty. Man recognizes and responds to beauty in the natural world and creates for himself images of beauty in paint and sound and stone. As we owe to man's reason science and philosophy, and to his moral sense ethics and justice, so to his sense of beauty we owe art. It is not only in his ability to create beauty that man's distinctiveness lies. Not less important from the point of view of the community is the ability to recognize and respond to beauty in those of us who cannot create. The sense of beauty is allied to that of right and wrong; a good life has a certain beauty, just as intercourse with beauty in art and literature affects our attitude to life, making us more sensitive to and considerate of the feelings of others, more resentful of cruelty and injustice, more critical of vulgarity and superficiality. We should no doubt read for the pleasure of reading; yet it may well be asked if pleasure is all that we are entitled to expect from fine literature. If a book excites thought, if it stimulates the sense of beauty, the sense of pity or the sense of sympathy, if it helps in any way towards the understanding of our fellow creatures, if it increases our vitality, if it awakens our conscience and thus indirectly influences our personal conduct—if it accomplishes any of these things, then it has value.

The Various Excellences of Man

Let us suppose that I am right in regarding these three—reason, morals, and the sense of beauty—as the distinctive attributes of man, and knowledge, goodness and beauty as the goods or values which man alone can recognize, and let us proceed to ask the question: 'Wherein is man's fullest development to be found?' Some men, it is obvious, are more fully and representatively human than others; are, that is to say, better

ABOUT EDUCATION

or more typical specimens of what our species is, when taken at its best. By what marks are we to recognize them? Clearly we shall find them in those who have developed to their fullest extent the distinctive characteristics of humanity; not, that is to say, in the strongest or the most ruthless or the most determined or the most powerful or the wealthiest or even the bravest members of our species, but in those in whom the characteristics of intelligence, virtue and good taste are most highly developed.

This, then, is in the last resort the function of that kind of education which I have called 'education for living', to develop in human beings these three attributes which are distinctive of our species, since only in their full development does a man reach the full stature of humanity; without it he is a man aborted. A man, I conceive, has a right to such development.

Chapter Three

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that Disraeli maintained that the English are not one but two nations; the nation of the privileged and the nation of the unprivileged, the nation of the powerful and the nation of the powerless, the nation of the rich and the nation of the poor. In essentials the description still holds and that it does hold is at least in part due to our educational system. This system is at once the prop and the mirror of our national duality; in other words, it both reflects the division of the country into two nations and propagates the division which it reflects. Thus arises a vicious circle in which, in the words of Ernest Green, Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association, 'economic privilege is used to purchase educational advantage and educational advantage to secure economic privilege'. The best way of visualizing the system is after the model of two ladders.

The Two Ladders

Here is one educational ladder; its first rung is the nursery governess, its second the kindergarten, its third, at ten years old, the preparatory school, its fourth the public school, its fifth at eighteen, Oxford or Cambridge or Edinburgh. Here is a second; it consists only of two rungs. Its first is the primary school; its second, to which children climb at the age of eleven, is the senior school which very often consists only of the higher forms of the primary school. Above these two rungs there is sometimes a third, the secondary school; but before you can put your feet on to that rung you require, if you are a climber on the second ladder, to win a scholarship or a free place from your primary school, unless your parents are rich enough, or snobbish enough, or have a sufficient faith in the value of education to be willing to pay all or most of your secondary school fees. But the parents of only a minute proportion of those who attend primary schools—in point of fact,

ABOUT EDUCATION

fewer than one in twenty-five—satisfy these conditions. The secondary school is a bridge leading from the second ladder to the first. A certain proportion of those who attend it—less than a fifth, perhaps more than a tenth—cross the bridge on the way to the University.

Speaking generally, one leaves the first educational ladder at twenty-two to find the gates of all the professions open to one. Beginning as a doctor, a lawyer, a clergyman, a public schoolmaster or an officer, one may end up as a Harley Street specialist, a judge, a bishop, a public school headmaster, a General or a Blimp. Again, speaking generally, one leaves the second educational ladder at fourteen, and proceeds immediately to earn one's living in industry or office. Beginning as an office boy, a newspaper boy, an errand boy, a pit boy, a shop assistant, or, if one is lucky, as an apprentice, one ends up as a clerk, a miner, a mill hand, or a shopkeeper—or one ends up on the dole.

The two ladders lead, it is obvious, to two very different sorts of lives. Those who have climbed the first become the governing classes. They enjoy, though in very varying degrees, wealth and power. Those who have climbed the second remain the working classes; they have no wealth and only so much power as their representatives in Parliament can win for them.

The Division of Power

The division of power is particularly instructive. We live under a democracy and are fighting to preserve it, both to preserve, and, we all profess to hope, to extend and complete it. In a democracy power is vested in the representatives of the people; is, therefore, vested in the House of Commons. How is membership of the House apportioned between the climbers of the two ladders? In a recently published book, *Parliamentary Representation*, Mr. J. F. Ross has analysed the educational origins of the 1935 House of Commons. The results are striking:

Percentage of the Population attending:

Public Schools	2
Secondary Schools	5
Elementary Schools	93

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Percentage of M.P.s educated at:

Public Schools	56
Secondary Schools	21½
Elementary Schools	22½

A particularly fat slice of power is reserved for those who have been fortunate enough to have been educated at Eton and Harrow. In the Parliaments elected between the two wars roughly a quarter of the Conservatives had been to Eton and a third had been either to Eton or to Harrow. Eton is responsible for no less than sixty per cent of the House of Lords. If you go to Eton, you have rather more than two thousand times as good a chance of entering Parliament as you would have done had you been to an elementary school; if to Harrow, one thousand eight hundred times as good a chance.

Conditions of Ladder Entry

What determines upon which of the two ladders a child shall set its foot? Natural ability, a receptive mind, a retentive memory, an interest in the things of the mind; in a word, the propensity to profit by education? None of these things. What determines his educational ladder is, broadly speaking, the possession or non-possession by the father of the child of a balance at the Bank.

Consequences of great moment follow from this, as it seems to me, arbitrary determination of a child's career and prospects. One is that, since four out of five of the inhabitants of Great Britain receive no education of any kind after the age of fourteen a great deal of first-rate potential ability, which may be lying latent somewhere among the four, is never detected, brought to the surface, developed and utilized for the benefit of the community. We tend, then, to choose our leaders in every walk of life from about one-fifth of the country's population, with results over the last twenty-five years, when we have been desperately in need of leadership, which have all too lamentable a freshness in our memories.

The injustice has its converse. Among those who ascend the first ladder are many upon whom what may for brief be called 'higher education' is wasted. They don't want it, they don't

ABOUT EDUCATION

value it and they don't possess the ability which would enable them to profit by it. They are Nature's technicians, mechanics, adventurers or idlers; not Nature's scholars, artists, administrators or statesmen. And so the treasure houses of learning and culture are opened to them in vain, and they leave the University having forgotten most of what little knowledge was drilled into them at school. 'No wonder,' a wit remarked, 'that Oxford and Cambridge are called the homes of learning; for so many bring a little learning there and so few take any away.'

The effect of the two ladders is to leave us still to-day, as we were in Disraeli's time, two nations. The first nation climbs the first ladder; it includes roughly one out of every thirty members of the community; the other twenty-nine go up the second ladder. The first owns (or rather owned in 1938) roughly 80 per cent of the country's capital¹ and draws as its share roughly between 50 per cent and 60 per cent² of the national income; it also, as we have seen, holds a disproportionate share of political power. The other twenty-nine own the remainder of the capital, draw the remainder of the incomes and scramble for what remains of the power.

The Two Roundabouts

(i) *The Public Schoolmasters' Roundabout.*

Having exhausted one metaphor, I proceed to another. This time I venture to draw the reader's attention to two roundabouts upon which teachers and teachers-to-be perform their gyrations. The roundabouts must be conceived complete with horses which I ask the reader mentally to substitute for the

¹ In fact 80 per cent of the capital was owned by 6 per cent of the population in 1938.

² Only 850,000 of those who in England are in receipt of income had in 1935 more than £500 a year, and of these 6,000 had over £20,000 each. Of these, 297 had £100,000 each and 79 had over £180,500 each. 22,700,000 of the people of England got less than £500 a year each. Of these, only 2,750,000 get over £250 a year; 4,100,00 got between £250 and £150 a year; 15,900,000 got less than £150, that is to say, less than £3 a week. Of these, 12,000,000 or three-quarters, receive less than £122 a year. Figures from *Food, Health and Income* by Sir John Orr, first published 1936.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

rungs of the ladders. At least, in the earlier stages they must be so substituted, since the steeds successively mounted by the travellers on the first roundabout are only our old friends, the preparatory school, the public school and the university now disguised as horses. What is the next stage in these travellers' progress? They become public schoolmasters. The process by which a university man turns into a public schoolmaster is a little ambiguous. Many vacancies no doubt are advertised in the usual way and ex-public school men can be seen scanning the pages of the *Times Educational Supplement* and thronging the doors of Messrs. Gabbitas and Thring in quest of them. Testimonials are demanded, so eminent and, it is to be presumed, friendly persons are approached; an inordinate number of copies is required, so the typing agency is called in. So much is clear and straightforward enough. But the better posts are not filled in this way, nor, I suspect, are most of the posts at the better schools. It is not by advertisement that Eton usually obtains its masters, nor does Winchester.

Selection of the Public Schoolmaster

How, then? It is difficult to say. The emergence of the public schoolmaster, like the emergence of the Fascist leader, is a process mystically conceived. The congenital public schoolmaster is a man thrown up as it were by natural processes; he simply appears, separating himself from the ruck of his contemporaries by virtue of the possession of certain marks. Like the Fascist leader, or the Tibetan Grand Lama, he is immediately recognized by these marks, but whereas in the case of the Grand Lama, the marks are physical and in that of the Leader psychological, the marks of the emerging public schoolmaster are of both kinds. There is a look in the eye, a tone of the voice, a bloom on the skin, a way with a pipe and a pouch and a smell of the open air; above all, there is a marked ability in the matter of hitting and kicking spherical and oval objects at the right time in the right direction and at the right speeds. The psychological marks are more ambiguous and as a rule can only be distinguished by those who themselves possess them. But I doubt if even they could describe them. There are certain *nuances* of attitude and tone; outstanding

ABOUT EDUCATION

among these are an attitude to religion, an attitude to sex, an attitude to boys, an attitude to games, an attitude to institutions, above all an attitude to the school. I cannot define these attitudes. Seen at their best they proclaim their possessor a man loyal, brave, kindly and chivalrous; at their worst a man stupid, pig-headed, obstinate, lazy, and brutal.

In addition to exhibiting the right attitudes, public school-masters must have some intelligence and a certain minimum of academic qualifications, though these latter, in the case of men possessing the physical marks in an outstanding degree, are indeed minimal. It is not absolutely *necessary* to be a Conservative in politics. . . .

Granted conformity with these specifications, one lets it vaguely be known—there is nothing so definite or so vulgar as a positive still less a public announcement—that one is ‘thinking of teaching’. Presently there are talks and even, it may be, letters! Old X mentions one’s name confidentially to old Y, preferably, if the mention is to bear fruit, after dinner. At some stage or other in the course of these interchanges the name of a school—it may be one’s old school—crops up. A visit is paid to the headmaster; one’s old teacher, perhaps, is interviewed, and the thing is done.

Or, it may be, that the school itself takes the initiative; it seeks one out, again through the mediation of old X and old Y, while one is still at the ‘Varsity; or the idea may occur to old X or to old Y. . . . However it comes about, there you are, at the age of twenty-four or twenty-five, back on the first school roundabout but sitting this time on a master’s horse.

Your future progress on the roundabout is now marked out and determined; you will spend your summer holidays playing cricket, climbing or going on walking tours; very likely, you will spend two or three weeks under canvas in camp with the boys or with poor boys from the East End, and another week, it may be, with four or five carefully selected boys on a reading party, probably in the Lakes. In the winter you will participate in winter sports in Switzerland. There you will ski, skate, bobsleigh, dance and meet a charming girl whom you will presently marry and take back to the school, where with some trepidation you will introduce her to the housemasters’ wives.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

In due course, you will ascend the next and, unless you are specially lucky, the last horse on your roundabout and become a housemaster yourself. The housemaster's job is the plum of your profession. If you are at a comparatively rich school, you will receive £1,000 a year, apart from what you can make out of your house. I refer to this as the last horse, but it is only the 'last for you'—unless, of course, you become a headmaster—for presently you will have male children who will follow you round the roundabout ascending horse after horse successively and in due order, until they have reached the university when, as a result of a decision to leave the roundabout, their careers may begin to diverge from your own.

Why do I toil away at this rather laboured and not always appropriate metaphor? It has, from my point of view, one great advantage; it enables me to throw into relief the truth that the riders who gyrate round this roundabout remain a race apart; apart, that is to say, from the rest of the community. They meet their own class, are educated with them, spend their holidays with them, marry them, beget them and teach them and, speaking generally, they do not at any stage of their official lives meet the members of any other class. They do not, for example, know what life is like in a mining village, in a cotton mill or in Middlesbrough. They do not meet the working classes except for a week or two in the summer holidays under canvas, or at a boy's club which they 'run' in the slums; above all, although they are teachers, they do not teach in the schools which the State maintains for the children of the working classes. They never, in fact, effectively leave their roundabout; there they sit, a class apart, hardening presently into a caste.

(2) The Teachers' Roundabout

Now, let me invite your attention to another roundabout, a roundabout which we ascend via the second ladder. You are, we will suppose, a clever little boy or girl and, at the age of eleven, you win a free place to a secondary school. Here you stay, sitting on your second horse, until you are sixteen or seventeen, when you begin to ask yourself or your parents begin to ask for you the question, what am I to do in my life?

ABOUT EDUCATION

Your parents, we will suppose, cannot afford to keep you any longer at school, or to send you to the University; and there is not enough money to train you for one of the professions. Your academic record is good, learning has come easily to you. You could, you feel, teach what you yourself have learnt. Then, why not become a teacher? And so, you decide to enter a Teachers' Training College. You haven't enough money to pay the fees? Right! The benevolent State, in the form of the Board of Education, will pay half of them for you—£50 out of the £100 annually that it costs to live at a residential College—and some part at least—it may be the whole—of the cost of the remainder will be borne by the relevant Local Authority. The scale on which the Authority will be prepared to contribute will be determined by the income of your parents and the other liabilities that they have to meet; in other words, your parents will be subjected to a Means Test. Part of what the Local Authority contributes will be a gift, but the larger part will probably be by way of loan, to be paid back out of your salary when you start teaching. At your Training College you will stay for two years, during which you will receive (1) instruction in the art of teaching; (2) a substitute for a university education. Teachers are also trained in University Training Departments, one of which is attached to most of the universities. In these Departments intending teachers spend a year usually after a three years' course at the University at the conclusion of which most but by no means all of them will have taken degrees. Most of the students from the University Training Departments pass into secondary schools and do not here immediately concern us. A substantial proportion, however, become teachers in primary and senior schools, where they constitute a small, comparatively well trained, teaching *élite*. Not having received such elaborate instruction in teaching methods they are, I am told, not so effective at the start as the men and women who come from the Teachers' Training Colleges. Within a few years, however, they have caught up and passed the ex-Training College teachers and their value is in almost every case greater, presumably because they have had a better general education.

My immediate concern is with the Teachers' Training Col-

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

leges from which four out of every five elementary school teachers are at present recruited, and which, it will be remembered, you have entered at seventeen or eighteen years of age, your fees being paid partly by the Board of Education and partly by the Local Authority.

At the Training College you are taught by teachers who are and your colleagues are teachers who are to be and only teachers who are to be. At the end of two years you will move on to the next horse on the roundabout, that is to say, you will leave the Training College to take up your first job which will almost certainly be in an elementary school, conceivably in the same elementary school as that in which you started your educational career fourteen or fifteen years ago.

The Teacher and the Community

Even at the Training College stage you and your fellow students are already beginning to separate yourselves from the rest of the community; already you are developing some of those marks which betoken your membership of a caste. There is a 'something', as we all know, about a teacher; the women are thought to be dowdy and unattractive; they wear spectacles, have flat bosoms and red noses with in winter a tendency to dewdrops; the men are sallow and apt to be stringy. They have large agitated Adam's apples, go bald quickly and perspire easily; they suffer from halitosis. . . . So, at least, the public, whose ideas on such matters are invariably a quarter of a century out of date, supposes.

Teachers have not much money but they have long holidays for which they are envied and disliked by the rest of the community.

The holidays are, however, to the average teacher something of a problem. Having outgrown the atmosphere of the homes from which they sprang and knowing nobody else in the world with whom to spend the long summer weeks, teachers tend to gravitate together on tours conducted by Messrs. Cook or Messrs. Dean and Dawson. Earnestly they flock, guide book in hand, through the cities and sights of Europe. A forgotten short story by H. G. Wells, *Miss Winchelsea's Heart* is a first-rate example of the popular conception of

ABOUT EDUCATION

the teacher on holiday. It is on holiday that the male meets the female teacher, nature takes her course, there is love and presently marriage, to which in due course children are born. What will the children do? They will become teachers of course. . . .¹

Here, then, is another self-perpetuating roundabout on whose horses there circulate the members of another segregated caste. The travellers on this second roundabout make even less contact with the community as a whole. They are poorer than the public schools' masters and cannot, therefore, on their holidays afford to stay at the hotels where members of other professions may be met. So poor, indeed, are the men who for the most part have married and are bringing up a family of children whom, on £350 or £400 a year, they are straining every financial nerve to send to secondary schools, that they cannot afford drinks and dinners out, cannot even afford theatres and cinemas, or can afford them very rarely, and must go home night after night, to sit after supper with a pipe over the fire, the wireless, carpet slippers and the wife their only joys. Nothing isolates a man more effectively than poverty, and the community which looks with suspicion upon teachers as men different and apart, is itself responsible for paying them the beggarly pittances which condemn them to be the objects of its suspicion.

The traveller on the second roundabout is lacking not less in social prestige than in money. Hence the motive of snobbery which induces some people to seek contact with the public school caste on holiday, plays no part in inducing an approach to primary school teachers. Nobody, after all, has anything to gain from meeting a teacher and teachers are, therefore, not approached. Thus, for a variety of causes teachers know teachers and only teachers; they live, move and have their being in a world of teachers; they talk teachers' shop, enjoy teachers' jokes, subscribe to teachers' grievances, live with teachers, marry teachers, bear and beget teachers and feel

¹ This, I am told, was, but is no longer true. Teachers are now so appalled at the conditions prevailing in their profession that they will strain every nerve to prevent their children from following in fathers' and mothers' footsteps.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

themselves as teachers at loggerheads with the community from which they conceive, and rightly, that they have had a raw deal. The community in its turn keeps well away. We all respond at the best with reserve, at the worst with suspicion to those whom we believe to be different from ourselves, and the English prejudice against 'braininess' combines with the natural suspicion of difference to prevent any closeness of intercourse from developing between teachers and 'the rest'.

This system seems to me to be bad, as bad as bad can be. Of the major objections to it, I cite three.

Objections to the Teachers' Roundabout

(1) *The Too Early Choice of Career*

It involves taking a decision in regard to one's future career at a ridiculously early age, in point of fact at seventeen or at latest eighteen when one enters the Teachers' Training College. It is, moreover, a decision which it is extremely difficult to recall, if only because, for many, it involves the receipt of a loan from the State or the Local Authority to cover the cost of training at the College, a loan which is given only in return for a pledge to become a teacher and which must be paid back when at the age of twenty or twenty-one one has begun to earn one's salary as a teacher. This system originated in the nineteenth century when after the passage into law of the various Education Acts, particularly those of 1870 and 1899, the State was left with hundreds of thousands of children on its educational hands for whom no teaching provision existed. Teachers were wanted and wanted quickly. Hence, the State offered grants and scholarships to those who would pledge themselves at the conclusion of their training to teach these new armies of children. With a natural disinclination to see its money and its training wasted, the State has always been careful to ensure that those who embark upon a course of studies preparatory to the teaching profession shall not burk the career for which they have been prepared. It is for this reason that it demands from the student at the commencement of his career at the Teachers' Training College a pledge to enter the teaching profession at the end of it; if there is no

ABOUT EDUCATION

pledge, there is no grant. Now of how many careers can it be said that at the age of eighteen one is in a position to choose them, or to choose between them, with any degree of informed judgment? Can it be said even of the career of marriage? I doubt it. It certainly cannot be said of the career of teaching. Teaching is not everybody's cup of tea; some are born to it and most can be trained to a respectable degree of competence in it; but there are some few who cannot by any amount of training, however intensive, be turned into even moderately good teachers. For one thing, a teacher must keep order in class and of this some human beings are congenitally incapable. The difficulty is that it is often impossible to tell to which of these categories you belong—and you can never be sure that you don't belong to the last—until you have had some little experience of what teaching involves. It follows that the decision to become a teacher should be made at the end and not at the beginning of one's period of training. This conclusion involves a somewhat different conception of the nature and purposes of a teacher's training from that which prevails at the Training Colleges, but of this more later.¹

(2) Segregation and the Caste System

The system segregates potential teachers from the first and imparts a powerful impetus to the formation of the second of the two teachers' castes, to which I have already drawn attention. The young person in a Teachers' Training College is already a young person set apart. Most of the Colleges are residential; they are cheaply run, regulated by antiquated rules—no smoking except at permitted hours, no drinking at any hours, graces before meals, and so on—and governed by elderly persons trained in an older tradition of discipline. In most of these Colleges there is a quite unnecessary degree of regimentation and petty interference with personal liberty. This is particularly true in the women's Colleges.

Above all, most of the Colleges are uni-sexual. The evil results of the segregation of the sexes between the ages of eighteen and twenty are well known. There is no reason to suppose that those persons who have decided to be teachers are exempt from them.

¹ See pp. 86-7 below.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

(3) *The Payment of Teachers*

(a) *The Facts.* The effect of segregation which begins at the Teachers' Training College and grows increasingly marked throughout the teacher's career is responsible for a third drawback, the drawback of inadequate remuneration. Teachers are scandalously and persistently underpaid.

The facts are not disputed. A mistress in an elementary school will start at from £150 to £180 a year, and rise by yearly increments of £9 to £258 or £324. At the end of forty years, when at sixty she retires, she will still be receiving £258 or £324.¹ Of this half will be paid to her on her retirement as pension, until she dies. Beyond the £324 she cannot rise, unless she becomes a headmistress. As a headmistress she will receive from £300 to £360. About one teacher in every two hundred becomes a headmistress.

Equivalent figures for men start from a salary of from £170 to £190 a year, and rise by yearly increments of £12 to £330, or in the cases of those fortunate to be employed by wealthy Local Authorities to £410 a year. As a headmaster, a man will receive from £460 to £567.²

When I ask young women teachers who, after a hard day's work, come to my lectures in the evening or at the weekend, why they overwork themselves to the point of nervous breakdown, they say they do it because they must at all costs obtain a degree. 'And why do you want a degree?' 'In order that we can stop being teachers and get another job.' 'And why do you want to leave the teaching profession?' 'Because the prospects are so poor.'

The fact that this conversation should be possible at a time when the country, faced by an unexampled shortage, is crying out for teachers, justifies a feeling of exasperation at the folly of the community's attitude but not, I submit, of surprise at the teachers'; for who would not leave a profession that offers

¹ £258 is the country, £324 the London figure. There are a number of intermediate figures in other towns. Not wishing to overburden this chapter with salary scales, I have taken average figures throughout.

² This chapter was written before the new scales of payment came into operation in April 1945.

ABOUT EDUCATION

to most of those who follow it a maximum of £300 a year with £360 as its plum for the very few?

(b) *Value of the Teacher to the Community.* I affirm that this payment entails a ludicrously inappropriate scale of values. In this respect it reflects a standard of payment which prevails throughout the educational world as a whole; for this, too, is ludicrously inappropriate. I am not here referring to the fact that upon the war we are spending fourteen millions a day to compass the destruction of our enemies, as I do not doubt the paramount importance of winning the war; nor even to the fact that prior to the war we spent one hundred and fifty millions annually upon advertising, that is to say, upon persuading people that they needed goods which somebody was anxious to sell them—if they *really* needed them and had the money, they would buy them soon enough without requiring to be persuaded that they wanted them—for the interests of commerce are sacred, and the last thing that I should desire is to incur the charge of approving, still less of fomenting 'sales resistance'. I do not even presume to comment upon the comparison between these figures and the seventy millions a year which before the war we were spending on elementary education. To contrast the earnings of the man who teaches with the wages of the man who plans death and destruction in the military, or even with the rewards offered to the man who sells something in the business world, would, given the scale of values prevailing in our civilization, be obviously inappropriate.

I content myself, therefore, with pointing out that a man can expect to earn more as a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant, an engineer or even as a clergyman, than as a teacher in a school provided by the State. All these are servants of the community. The services they render are at once more direct and, in my view, more beneficial than those rendered by the business man who buys and sells for his own profit; yet who will say that the purpose of any of these professions is less important, or that the practice of them is less arduous than that of teaching? We pay the architect more and the engineer; is, then, the building of houses and bridges more important than the building of citizens? We pay the civil servant more; is it, then, more important to administer the laws that regulate

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

our conduct than to supervise the studies which form our character? We pay the doctor more; do we, then, believe that the body is more important than the mind?

The Duties of a Teacher

The duties of a teacher are, in my view, not less important than those of any member of the community and more important than those of nine out of every ten members of the community.

The teacher trains the minds, assists the manners and shapes the morals of members of the community at their most impressionable age. He helps to form our first conceptions of good and bad, social and anti-social, beautiful and ugly. He is in some part responsible for our outlook on politics. He teaches us how to master dull subjects and to discipline ourselves to tedious jobs—who after all ever wanted to learn the multiplication table for fun?—and so helps to form our characters. The good teacher must enlighten by his example, show wisdom in his discourse and restraint by his silence; he must help the willing with a welcoming encouragement; overcome the recalcitrant with a patient determination, and check the exhibitionist with a seasonable superciliousness.

What he stands for, important at all times, is of paramount importance in the deepening blackout of spiritual and intellectual values by which our age is oppressed. Now these many tasks of the teacher, delicate and difficult as we cannot but consider them to be, have to be performed in an environment which fails to encourage, even when it does not definitely obstruct, their performance.

The Teacher's Environment

Those who are not familiar with the conditions which prevail in the average elementary school, or who know them only from the films which, representing for propaganda purposes as the average what is, in effect, the rarest of exceptions—how well we know them, those films of cheery, rosy children, running in the sunlight; the sun is always shining, the leaves are always green, the classroom bright and airy, the teacher kind and good-tempered; the faces of the children have recently been washed. Yet there is not one school in fifty that conforms to the

ABOUT EDUCATION

standard set by the traditional school of the films—do not conceive, because they cannot imagine the circumstances in which education is actually conducted. Let me try to assist conception.

Conceive, then, a large forbidding building, a cross between a barracks and a prison, situated in a slum area. All round are factories; the chimneys of the factories are smoking and as a consequence the walls of the building are covered with grime; if the windows are opened, smuts fly into the classrooms. The building is surrounded with iron railings. In front is a playground, floored with asphalt; the asphalt is cracked and broken and in its holes are pools of water; within is a humid cloakroom, whose few pegs confess their lamentable inadequacy to support the garments of the multitudinous children who throng it. There are three or four cracked basins into whose bowls rusty taps dribble their exiguous streams of cold water.¹ The place is ill-ventilated and on wet days reeks of sodden garments which there are no facilities for drying. Through the cloakroom you pass into the classrooms—bright, bare and garish. There are no carpets on the floors, no curtains at the windows; rows of ink-stained desks accommodate two or even three children per desk. On the walls, usually distempered chocolate or green, are maps and brightly coloured lithographs, representing animals, flowers, mountains and historical personages . . . there are also charts. In this classroom between fifty and sixty children are accommodated. The room is separated from the classroom next door by a partition, through which percolate the sounds of other children and teachers at work upon other classes, the emanations of the school band or the sounds of boys playing the piccolo, the pipe, or even the trumpet. . . .²

¹ At a meeting of the National Union of Women Teachers, held at Blackpool in April 1944, Miss M. Raymonde-Hawkins gave a number of instances of schools in which there was only one bowl of washing water for seventy children. Few schools in London have electric light; fewer, indoor sanitation; fewer still, a telephone.

² On reading this, I see that the word 'pipe' is misleading. To my own mind it brings back the memory of my last visit to an elementary school. In the classroom next to the one visited boys were busily engaged in making small wooden pipes for the school band. The

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

At all times frequently and in wartime continuously the teacher is interrupted.

The Headmistress's Day

Let us suppose that the teacher is a headmistress. On arrival at the school she finds a bundle of letters¹ waiting for her. *First letter*: 'Sorry to impose this extra duty: children of certain ages with feet exceeding 8½ inches (girls) are due to have twenty extra clothing coupons. Will she measure their feet?' (Children of eleven years are quite likely to have feet exceeding 8½ inches, so that the feet of most of the school have to be measured and a form filled up in respect of each child whose feet qualify her for the coupons.) *Second letter*: Safety First: 'Will Head Teachers remind children of the importance of—well, whatever it is that is important at the moment.' (Yes, she knows it's important, and writes a letter and pledges herself to do what she can.) *Third*: 'The gas masks stored for the Rest Centre are to be examined that afternoon. Will she see that the officer has access to—well, wherever it is that they are stored.' *Fourth*: 'Milk and dinners must be continued during the holidays. Will she see that the necessary arrangements are made?' *Fifth*: 'Four ovens are being delivered for the new kitchen to be established at the school. Will she see that the necessary arrangements are made for their reception and storing?' *Sixth*: Forms arranging for dental treatment to be given to the children named are to be filled up. Will she see . . . ? *Seventh*: A folder from the Waifs and Strays to remind the school that it has helped them in other years. 'Will she see that something is done about it this year?'

Nine o'clock approaches and the girls assemble for prayers.

making of these pipes entailed boring holes in the bamboo, holes of the right size and in the right place in order to produce the right notes. Obviously the pipes had to be tested again and again to see if the holes were made correctly. The result was a series of sounds shrill and deep, which penetrated the partition in which the history lesson to which I was trying to listen was being given.

¹ I take the bulk of what follows from an actual account of a headmistress's day by Gertrude Harper, which appeared in the *International Women's News*.

ABOUT EDUCATION

She makes a list of the items she must mention in Hall which runs roughly as follows:

(a) Safety First. (b) Measurement of feet. (c) Gas masks (having been reminded of them by the Rest Centre notice). (d) Red Cross. (e) War Savings. (f) Waifs and Strays. (g) General talk on work for the day—which comes last on the list and is nearly squeezed out altogether.

There is a shortage of teachers at the moment, so to relieve congestion she has to teach a class for the rest of the day. On the staff are three new young teachers who arrived after the summer vacation, all without experience in dealing with classes of girls; one is only eighteen years of age, having come straight from her secondary school. She cannot be expected to manage classes satisfactorily. Nevertheless, there is nobody else, so she is sent to take a class; the headmistress puts her into the room next to her own, and rushes in to help her when necessary. As to the other two 'freshers', she salves her conscience by thinking that, since they have received some training at a Teachers' Training College, they should be able to manage.

The arithmetic lesson comes next, which must be given on what is called, 'the individual method' because half the girls are very backward. This is fraught with risk, the risk of constant interruption of the 'Mrs. So-and-so must see you; this is the only time she can come, because she goes to work this afternoon', type. At the beginning of every lesson the question of absentee children must be inquired into; in wartime these are numerous and become more numerous as the war goes on. In the middle of it the telephone bell goes. The headmistress lies low hoping that someone will answer; somebody does only to return with the message that '*they* would like to speak to *you* from the office'.

She then gives two literature lessons, not without interruptions, and as twelve approaches, keeps a wary eye on the playground, since the woman who drives the dinner van is always in a hurry and must unload her containers with the greatest possible speed. Dinner follows at twelve.

In what little time may be left to her after dinner before afternoon school, the headmistress tries to tackle pressing

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

clerical work and visits the Staff room to collect news of the teachers' mornings.

In afternoon school she gives an English lesson in the course of which half a dozen interruptions occur, all reasonable and justifiable. For example, a couple of parents arrive to ask her to apply for oranges for children to be sold at the school, so that the children will not have to stand in queues. This happens just after she has coped with the measuring of feet and the making out of the necessary returns. The next interrupter comes to suggest that orange juice should be given out in school for the under-fives. (Cod liver oil and malt and Parrish's Food are already sold, and stocks have from time to time to be inspected and replenished.)

I have mentioned only a few of the interruptions that occur in the course of the average headmistress's day. It would, however, be unfair to omit a reference to firewatching, since firewatching means that she, together with two other members of the staff, must spend one night a week on the school premises, sleeping in the staffroom; for two days their meals are picnic and for one night their sleep interrupted. Is it any wonder that the headmistress reaches Friday evening with nerves frayed and temper short, deplored the fact that she has allowed herself to become a jack of all trades, in the intervals of following which she must contrive, if she can, to introduce a little teaching?

The Teacher's Day

It is not to be supposed that these multifarious duties fall solely upon headmistresses. All teachers are affected in their degree. In the course of half-an-hour's literature lesson, the average teacher may well be interrupted half-a-dozen times. Milk bottles are brought in and milk money is collected; savings stamp money is collected; dinner tickets are distributed or collected; inspectors arrive; extra children, probably evacuated, appear for whom there is no adequate accommodation; as a result some children must sit three to a desk; they scuffle, pinch one another, giggle. When it comes to the distribution of books for the lesson it turns out that there are not enough of them. Who, then, is to look over whom? Somebody comes

ABOUT EDUCATION

in and says that a census must be taken of the number of children who are requiring school dinners that week. Have the dinner-requiring children brought their money? No. Then they must go and get it. Somebody comes from the headmaster to collect medical forms; some children, of course, have not brought their forms; they are sent home to fetch them. Another message from the headmaster! The School Medical Officer has arrived and wants a room in which to conduct medical examinations; no other room, it appears, is available. Would the teacher mind giving up her room? Of course she minds, but she has no alternative. So off she goes with her class to join somebody else's class in an already overcrowded classroom.

And so it goes on, with the result that the teacher reaches the end of her day physically, mentally and nervously exhausted without even the satisfying sense that rewards the doer of a good day's job well done. On the contrary, she is oppressed with a sense of frustration. During a large part of her day she has been thwarted, interrupted and prevented from doing the work that she wants to do, is trained and qualified to do, undertook to do and can do, by the hundred and one irrelevant calls that the community makes upon her time and energies.

The Community's Maid of all Work

For the truth is that the community in its emergency has turned the teachers into its maids of all work. So low is the estimation in which education is held that any and every service and need takes precedence over it. When the community goes to war, teaching takes a back seat. It is something that can be done at any time, done, therefore, when the more pressing things have been got out of the way.

And so it comes about that without the courtesy of consultation teachers are continually burdened with extraneous duties which must be frequently carried out under intolerable conditions. They are asked to do anything and everything but teach. They are billeting officers and evacuating officers; they call on parents, take children to air raid shelters, supervise dinners, distribute milk, administer cod liver oil and orange juice, in-

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

spect children's clothes, boots and hair, measure and weigh them for extra clothing coupons and end their day with fire-watching. Whenever a job has to be done for which nobody is immediately available or obviously eligible, the teacher is impounded to do it. His work is everybody's work and nobody's. Also it is work that is never done.

Tribute to Teachers

And here let me come to an avowal. I have not many bouquets to distribute in this book and it is high time that I presented one of them—to the teachers. For teachers receive so few. Read the history books and reflect for a moment upon those whom mankind has chosen to honour. First on the list are the Kings, Caliphs, Sultans, Emperors, Dictators, Grand Viziers; the holders, in a word, of absolute power. And how have they used their power? To satisfy their appetites, increase their possessions, enlarge their dominions, aggrandize their personalities, wreak vengeance upon their enemies and confer favours upon their friends; or they have made war. Next on the list are the wagers of war, the generals, admirals, commanders, strategists; those, in a word, who have been successful in organizing the mass slaughter of their fellow men on the largest possible scale. Reflect upon the misery which has followed in the wake of the conquerors; the hunger, the cold, the thirst, the pain of wounds, the torture, the rape, the plunder, the boredom. . . . 'History', said Gibbon, 'is a record of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.' Gibbon is right. Look back over human history and you will not bear to think of the sum total of human misery which it records. Yet with what unanimity have men honoured the major architects of their misfortunes. In all the great cities of the civilized world the highest monuments, the most dominating statues, the grandest shrines are reserved for the great destroyers.

Teachers are those who care for and instruct us when we are young; they enlighten our ignorance, help to form our characters and give us the rudiments of manners; they turn us, in fact, from little animals into human beings. They are literally the builders and makers of mankind. Yet who ever thought of honouring a teacher; who ever gave a teacher a knighthood or

ABOUT EDUCATION

even letters to put after his name? Some few there are who achieve power and prominence in the community as the famous headmasters of public schools, or the heads of colleges. It is, no doubt, in the nature of things that those whose academic lot is set in the pleasant places, whose teaching is done in gracious surroundings, who are not overwhelmed by vast and unmanageable classes, who live in comfortable houses and cultivated environments, who receive consideration and respect, have the spending of substantial salaries and enjoy the pleasures of power should be from time to time honoured by the community for performing their enjoyable functions—in the nature of things as they are, not of things as they should be. Again, men of learning are sometimes honoured and a knighthood and even an O.M. has not been beyond the range of the legitimate ambitions of those who have advanced knowledge, added to man's store of beauty, or thrown light upon the hidden places of the universe. But it is not of these that I am speaking, when I say that nobody ever honours a teacher. I am speaking of the common or garden ruck of the teaching profession, of, in fact, nineteen teachers out of twenty—there were 170,000 of them in England and Wales in 1938—striving in the unfavourable environment I have so briefly sketched, amid endless interruptions to do their best for the children of a community that does very much less than its best for them.

I should like to put on record my ungrudging admiration for these men and women. It is not merely that they are selfless, patient and conscientious—‘at least nine tenths of them, as I know, good and steady men and women,’ says Dr. Spencer—that they have a vivid sense of the high nature of their calling and discharge it to the best of their ability; not less important and not the smallest item in the debt that the community owes them is the fact that in a philistine society, governed by the values of the stomach and the pocket, they maintain a respect for the things of the mind and try to keep alight the torch that has been entrusted to them, that they may hand it on undimmed to their successors. In many a remote village, in many an industrial slum the teacher shares with the parson the privilege of being the witness to the truths that there is an order of reality other than that of bodies moving about in space, that there are

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

ideals higher than those of acquiring and possessing material objects and that the chief end of man is not the movement of his body to the end that his appetites may be satisfied, that, in a word, men cannot live by bread alone.

It is, I repeat, a high task; yet it is performed in an atmosphere of public indifference with little recognition and no encouragement.

There are a number of professions, for example, the profession of the doctor, who heals our bodies, or of the priest who tends our souls, whose members seem to me in respect of public spirit and selflessness to stand apart from the ordinary ruck of competing mankind; yet I would accord no lower place to the teacher who nourishes our minds, while I would put him above both in respect of the fact that, while their services are commemorated and valued, the teacher is often overlooked, or remembered only that he may be the better despised. The teachers I have known are not inferior in intelligence, knowledge, morals, manners or social amenity to the number of any class or profession of the community. They are good talkers; they try hard, pathetically hard sometimes, to keep themselves up to date, to read the right books, and to maintain a nodding acquaintance with public affairs. They are, most of them, abreast of developments in their profession, and accept the obligation of cultured people to keep themselves alert and informed and their minds fresh and bright; they can talk with ease and opportunity to every class of the community, to the exacting administrator and the finicky inspector, no less than to the stupid and suspicious parent, and they have cheerfully accepted the hundred and one burdens which the community places upon their backs. I say 'cheerfully', yet on reconsideration the word is not wholly apt, for one of the outstanding characteristics of teachers is a real concern for the job they are doing, or rather are supposed to be doing. Unwaveringly they believe in the importance of education. They can see that this job of training minds and building citizens is of first-class importance. They are among the few who in contemporary society believe in the value of their work and many of them rejoice in it. In a word, they have faith. It is this faith which makes it hard for them to understand why

ABOUT EDUCATION

the community should be so little conscious of the value of what they do for its children, that it should be prepared on any and every excuse to bid them interrupt or discontinue the duties of their profession. They cannot understand, in a word, why the community should not share their faith. And so they are led to ask themselves whether, seeing that the *officially* appointed guardians of education betray their trust, it may not be the business of its *natural* guardians to observe it; 'We', they say, 'are the naturally appointed guardians of education, made so by our daily intercourse with the children we teach. Have we, then, the right to neglect them even when the community bids us do so?' I think that teachers are right to ask themselves these questions; that if they did not ask them they would dishonour the faith that is in them. Teachers with miners receive the rawest deal of any class in contemporary society, and unless we can do better by them, we shall speedily find that the supply of men and women prepared to undertake this thankless task has failed us.

The Payment of Teachers. (c) *The Shortage of Supplies.* For—and here I come to my third reason—unless the status of teachers is drastically improved and their payment substantially increased, we shall find that men and women are no longer available for the teaching profession.

Before the war there were roughly some 170,000 teachers at work in primary schools. The annual output from the Training Colleges was 7,000, of whom one-third were men. In addition, there were some 25,000 persons teaching in secondary schools. Since the war the recruitment of male teachers has ceased, with the result that in the fifth year of the war the number of teachers at work in the country is considerably smaller than it was at the beginning being, in fact, in the neighbourhood of 160,000. Of these only one-fifth are men. In order to make good the shortage, especially of male teachers, which will exist by the end of the war and to bring us back to the pre-war level, another 50,000 teachers will be required. To raise the school-leaving age to fifteen, while at the same time ensuring that classes do not exceed thirty in number, from 50,000 to 60,000 teachers will be required in excess of the number functioning at the beginning of the war. To raise it to sixteen will involve

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

the appointment of a further 50,000. To make the same point in terms of children, to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen will, according to Mr. Butler, involve 400,000 extra places; to sixteen, another 400,000.

Mr. Butler produces these figures as a reason for not making precise promises in regard to dates. I would suggest that the true moral is that we should release teachers from the army.

A further supply of teachers will also be required to staff the Young People's Colleges envisaged under the Butler Act. There must also presumably be teachers to teach the new armies of teachers.

The position is, then, that whether we raise the school-leaving age to fifteen or not, 50,000 new teachers on a conservative estimate, will be required at the end of the war. The scheme at present sponsored by the Board of Education—I am writing before the publication of the report of the McNair Committee on the training of teachers—provides for an extra flow of recruits to the number of an additional ten thousand a year, hurried under high pressure through special one-year courses, in addition to the profession's normal intake of about seven thousand a year. On this basis it will take six years from the end of the war to train enough teachers to enable us to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen.

But what guarantee is there that either the traditional facilities or the emergency courses will be fully used? Why should the number of recruits be adequate to maintain the steady pre-war flow of seven thousand new entrants a year, let alone the additional numbers required, (a) to make good the shortage caused by the war; (b) to enable the school-leaving age to be raised to fifteen; (c) to enable the school-leaving age to be raised to sixteen, leaving extras such as the staffing of the Young People's Colleges out of account? I have already referred to those of my students who desire to take degrees not in order that they may become, but in order that they may cease to be teachers. Whoever has heard teachers talk about their profession knows how deep seated and how widespread is the dissatisfaction which prevails among them in regard to their pay, to their status and their prospects. 'I hope,' said a woman delegate at the April 1944 meeting of the N.U.T.,

ABOUT EDUCATION

'that the profession will not lift a finger to persuade one young man or woman to enter the service, unless they are guaranteed a decent job, decent conditions, and a decent salary.' The hope was echoed in loud applause from the delegates. Until, then, the profession is made more attractive, (a) by substantially raising salaries, (b) by improving social status, I do not see how the country is to obtain teachers, which it professes to want.

The Grievances of Teachers

Until more teachers are forthcoming, proposals for improving the educational system belong to the category of political window dressing. Again and again I have heard teachers inveigh against the political hypocrisy which demands that the school-leaving age be raised to fifteen at the end of the war, while willing none of the measures which are necessary to make the demand practicable; which proposes to cater for more children, when it can provide neither the buildings nor the teachers for the children for whom it has already contracted to cater; which, in a word, instead of addressing itself to the remedying of existing abuses, would make political capital out of their aggravation.

For what are the facts? Two are highly relevant. Most teachers were even in peacetime trying to teach well over forty pupils in their classes; many were teaching over fifty.¹ As the result of the war, the position has seriously deteriorated and teachers now endeavour to teach between forty and fifty children in a class; many teach between fifty and sixty. It is universally agreed that effective teaching in such circumstances is impossible. A President of the Board of Education, whose concern was to reform the educational system rather than to acquire political prestige by pretending to do so, would, say the teachers, begin at the beginning by taking steps to reduce the size of existing classes, instead of taking credit for sponsoring a measure which, given existing conditions, would increase them. Secondly, not only are there not enough teachers to go round, but the shortage is more particularly acute in the case

¹ The peacetime figures are as follows. In 1938 there were 145,281 classes in elementary schools; 98,779 contained over thirty pupils; 45,000 over forty.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

of those who teach the older children. There simply are not the men or women available to cope with these children. Many so-called Senior Schools do not know what to do with children from eleven to fourteen; there are no teachers qualified to instruct them and those who could once have done so have, after years of drudgery with the very young, largely lost the ability to instruct older boys and girls. As Professor Gruffydd put it in the debate on Mr. Butler's Education Act (March 1944), 'It is pathetic to see them', the older children, 'fumbling their way without guidance through tattered old class books. It would have been better for them if they had entered into some decent occupation.' One of the most tragic features of the contemporary situation is that boys and girls in Senior and even in Secondary schools, whose minds are at their first flowering, open and receptive to any influence that may be brought to bear on them languish untaught, or try vainly to find their own way through the thickets of learning, because the teachers who might have taught them are peeling potatoes or cleaning latrines in the army. The moral is twofold. (1) We must have more teachers. (2) While there are not enough to make the existing provision for education a reality, it is idle to talk of extending that provision.

When extension is under discussion, it is often urged that the existing facilities for the training and provision of teachers render it impracticable. It is also said that it takes years to train a teacher and that the existing number of teachers is not capable of being substantially increased within the immediate post-war period. I agree that it takes years to train a teacher, I agree, too, that given existing conditions, the number of teachers will not be substantially increased within *any* period, but I demur to the view that it is impracticable to increase the number of teachers, given a change of conditions. In my view, we can get as many teachers as we want, so soon as we consent to a sufficient improvement in their salaries and their status. Double the salaries of all teachers at a stroke as an earnest of further improvements to come, make provision for all teachers to go for at least three years to a University or Civic College,¹ insist on all teachers having degrees (in

¹ See pp. 86, 87 below.

ABOUT EDUCATION

comparatively unenlightened Scotland this is already obligatory in the case of men), distribute a few knighthoods to some teachers at the end of the war, and put letters after the names of more, and you will find that there is little difficulty in securing an adequate supply of teachers.

Having reached the point of making what is, in effect, a recommendation, albeit a rhetorical one—for who would ever think of giving a teacher a knighthood, or even a D.B.E.?—I had better address myself to the business of practical recommendation. What, then, might we reasonably require from, let us say, a Labour Government within the decade after the war?

Recommendations

Recommendations follow naturally from the acceptance of the principles suggested in this chapter and the last, and I do not propose to try to present anything in the nature of a detailed list. Provided the will exists, the reform of the educational system is comparatively easy. We can all of us draw up half a dozen different paper schemes as we sit at our desks, any one of which would be an enormous improvement on the existing situation. I do not wish, therefore, to insist on the details of what follows or to suggest that they could not with advantage be modified by the sponsors of the other schemes which are being so eagerly canvassed at the present time, who are much more knowledgeable, many of them, than I am or can ever hope to be.

I. The Two Ladders

These should disappear and one ladder should take their place; its rungs are, nursery school at four or five, primary school at seven, secondary school at eleven. At sixteen an examination supplemented by interviews and reports on school record. As a result of the examination a transfer either:

- (a) To a public school (see next chapter), or
- (b) To a Young People's College for full or part-time education until eighteen or nineteen.

If, (a) then (see next chapter), entry into a University from nineteen to twenty-two;

If (b) entry into the field of full employment at nineteen and, conceivably, of part-time employment at sixteen.

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

It is, in my view, desirable that another rung should be inserted somewhere about seventeen or eighteen which should stand for six months or a year's open air life, during which boys will learn how to camp, swim, ride, climb, make a fire, shoot, and make some acquaintance with the elementary operations of agriculture.

Up this single ladder all children should proceed, irrespective of the social and economic position of their parents; and they should climb just as far as their talents and abilities will take them. Their fees should be paid by the State and grants should be given to parents according to their needs, to enable them to maintain and clothe their children while they are still at school and during their holidays, if they are at boarding school.

II. The Two Roundabouts

What is essential is to break down the watertight compartments in which teachers move and have their being; or, rather, the two watertight compartments, since teachers on the two roundabouts are not only isolated from one another but also from the community, those on the second roundabout being more effectively isolated than those on the first. So far as concerns the separation between the two roundabouts, this will disappear with the abolition of the two ladders. If there is only one system of education in the country, then teachers will be recruited for it from the same sources, trained by the same methods and passed through the same channels. We shall no longer contemplate the spectacle of teachers from one particular social stratum qualifying by a particular kind of training to teach in a particular kind of school children belonging only to the same social stratum. Our problem will be a more general one, namely, that of choosing the best kind of training for those who are to teach the community's children in the community's schools.

Questions involved in the solution of this problem are detailed and difficult.¹ I can here answer them only in the most

¹ I am writing this before the publication of the Report of the McNair Committee on the training of teachers.

ABOUT EDUCATION

general sort of way in consonance with the principles I have suggested.

Civic Colleges

Teachers' Training Colleges should cease to exist. For them there should be substituted Civic Colleges. These, which should be residential, should endeavour to give a general training in the field first opened up by the brilliantly successful London School of Economics for a variety of different professions which involve service to and contact with members of the community. Examples are the professions of Youth Leader, Hospital Almoner, Probation Officer, Employment Exchange Officer, Local Government Officer, Supervisor of Infant Welfare Clinics, Home Office and Ministry of Health Inspector. All these are administrators or executors of the multitude of comparatively new services which the modern State renders to its citizens. For all these the same general training in psychology, in history, in sociology, in economics, in the principles and structure of government both national and local is, I suggest, appropriate. There is also training in the art of dealing with people for which somebody should devise a course in 'personal relations'. This same training is also appropriate for teachers.

I suggest that both tuition and boarding fees at the Civic Colleges should be a charge on the State, and that additional grants should be given to enable students to maintain themselves during vacations.

The Civic Colleges should, then, for the first three years give to all their students the same general course, a course at University standard. At the end of this period, students should be asked to make a choice between the different alternative professions which their general training will have fitted them to take up. Some, it may be presumed, would choose to be teachers. They would then either at the same College, at one of the existing Universities, or, even, it may be, at a special Teachers' College—though this for the reasons given above is to be deprecated—undertake a further special course in the practice of teaching. This proposal is designed to remedy the two major defects of the existing system, namely: (1) That it involves a

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

decision to be a teacher at too early an age. To choose your profession at twenty-one is reasonable, provided that you have an opportunity of revising your choice; to choose it at seventeen or eighteen is not. (2) That it involves a segregation of teachers from the moment when they leave school from the entrants to and followers of other professions. Residence at the proposed Civic Colleges would mean a period of three years' training in common with men and women not destined to be teachers.

Can Teaching be Taught?

This last objection demands a word of amplification. What teachers need is a good general education at University standard. We recognize this need in travellers on the first roundabout who at Oxford and Cambridge will have read classics or history, or philosophy, or science or mathematics, but will have spent little or no time at all in learning how to teach. This is right; for, as I take leave to insist once more, the technique of teaching is not something that can readily be taught or learnt. You keep discipline easily, without difficulty, or not at all because you are that sort of person; and if with difficulty or not at all, then nobody can help you to keep it easily. You present a subject clearly and interestingly or confusedly and boringly because you have that sort of mind; and if confusedly or boringly, then no amount of instruction will enable you to present it clearly and interestingly or it will help you very little.

There are certain exceptions to this very wide generalization. For example, there are certain general principles of teaching which can be inculcated; certain uniformities in the matter of method which can be prescribed. It would, for instance, be confusing for a young child to be subjected to one method of teaching in one class and a totally different method in the next, or to one method for one subject and another method for a cognate subject. Again, the teaching of very young children requires a special technique which can be learnt and still more the teaching of mentally defective or psychologically abnormal children. But, by and large, the wider and longer the general, the shorter the special education of teachers, the better. Too

ABOUT EDUCATION

much attention has been paid to the technique of teaching; too little to ensuring that the teacher is a normally well educated person.

Specific Recommendations

Five subsidiary points:

(1) The Civic Colleges should be affiliated to the existing Universities, so that there could be easy transition from College to University for the following of special courses. It might be desirable to prescribe one year at the University (apart from the special teachers' course which might also be followed there) for every student who had passed through a Civic College.

(2) The Civic Colleges should offer Refresher Courses for existing teachers. These should be taken not only for a month or a fortnight every year, but for six months every ten years and twelve months ever twenty years. Teachers get into grooves; their techniques ossify; their minds rust. It is stipulated in the leases of most houses that they should be painted and done up outside every three years and inside every seven, but nobody ever thinks of doing up a schoolteacher. There are teachers at work in this country who haven't been painted inside for fifty years and very rusty they must be and damping for all those who are unfortunate enough to come into contact with them. Teachers should continue to receive their salaries while they are attending these courses.

(3) Pending the establishment of the Civic Colleges, the scope of the University Training Departments should be considerably extended to enable them to cater for more intending teachers. The adoption of this proposal involves certain changes in the Universities themselves. (a) As things are, most Universities treat their University Training Departments as poor relations. In common with almost everything else connected with the teaching profession, they are inadequately staffed and badly equipped. Hence an upgrading of the status of the University Training Department is entailed. (b) Existing University Training Departments will require considerable enlargement and those Universities which are at present without them would be required to establish them. It would be

LADDERS AND ROUNDABOUTS

necessary to provide that all students attending them should already have taken degrees, and not merely some as at present. The general object should be to ensure that at the earliest possible moment the training of teachers is brought within the scope of the University system and that nobody is allowed to enter the teaching profession, unless he or she has first obtained a degree.

These, however, I repeat, are interim measures pending the establishment of the Civic Colleges.

(4) Pending the institution of Civic Colleges and an extension of the University Training Departments sufficient to enable them to cater for all intending teachers, the existing Teachers' Training Colleges should be remodelled. Their isolation should be broken down, the dead hand of obsolete regulations in regard to smoking, drinking and segregation of the sexes should be removed, and they should be brought more closely into touch with the national life; in particular their so-called 'affiliation' to Universities which in many cases denotes what is, in fact, a paper connection only, should be made a real one and every teacher's course should include not less than a year at the University.

(5) While the war lasts, the Training Colleges should be preparing special courses for the large army of teachers who will be required at the end of the war. Teachers who are already trained should be taken out of the army now, some to prepare these courses, some to conduct them, some to teach the older boys now at school and prevent them from lapsing into barbarism. An immediate demand—I am writing in the fifth year of the war—should, then, be the release of forty thousand teachers to put education on its feet again after the war.

Chapter Four

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Garden at Winchester

I am writing this in the grounds of Winchester College. I went hesitantly through a door in a stone wall, open for a wonder, and found myself in a small closed garden. The lawn is so close shaven that it looks like green fur growing on the ground. Along one side of it runs a little rushing stream, crossed by a stone bridge leading to a terraced walk on which I am sitting with my legs hanging over the stream. (I do not know whether the garden is private; I suspect that in spite of the open door it is. But as I am about to celebrate its beauties I hope its guardians, should they appear, will look kindly on me and let me write my way in peace. For it is a good place for writing....) Behind is an early Georgian house of red brick, its flat, pleasant face broken by those so perfectly proportioned windows of which the eighteenth century had the secret. (Why, by the way, have our architects lost it?) On my right there is a wide herbaceous border, backed by an old stone wall along which peach and fig trees are growing. An arched doorway in the wall leads to another and larger garden beyond; the wall is topped by the roof and towers of Winchester Cathedral only a hundred yards or so away.

I have not the art to describe the beauty or to convey the quiet peace of this place. Since art is lacking, I confine myself to four bald statements:

(1) Here is one of those blends of the works of nature and man which seem in our own country to be more readily achieved, and more happily and easily graced by beauty than in any other; each enhances and is enhanced by the other.

(2) The scene is peculiarly English. Nowhere else in the world, one feels, could there be just such another garden, lawn, red brick house, herbaceous border, Cathedral roof.

(3) What I see is the end product of a long-continuing tra-

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
dition, running back through our history, in this particular case, to the Tudors.

(4) The scene could be paralleled at any one of a dozen public schools, at Eton for example, at Marlborough, at Uppingham, or at Sherborne, though, biased perhaps by contiguity of time and place, I think its elements have reached a greater perfection here than elsewhere. But the familiar atmosphere, an atmosphere to which the beauty of nature and a long tradition of secure men living dignified and leisured lives, no less than the skill of architects and the loving care of gardeners, has contributed, can be savoured in the precincts of any one of a dozen of our public schools.

Atmosphere of Winchester

I have taken this garden as a symbol of Winchester and of that for which it stands.

For in the precincts of the College and the Cathedral the same pervasive characteristics of dignity and beauty, of security and serenity, present themselves wherever the visitor turns. There is the morning service in the lovely chapel whose 450 boys sing the hymns and psalms, as if they really meant them; so much so, that for an instant it was possible to succumb to the delusion that here, for once, Christianity was believed, even if, the moment of enchantment past, one was telling oneself not to be silly. There are the wide grounds, the passages, and cloisters and the playing fields alive with jolly boys and exquisitely mannered young men; there are the so-intelligent masters, there are even the charming masters' wives. In the evening after dinner I participated with three young masters in a discussion of the contemporary situation which for quick-minded alertness, for information and understanding, for sympathy and warm-hearted concern, above all for the aspirations of a disinterested idealism—how eagerly these young men wished to take a hand in the making of a better world—put similar conversations such as I have had recently in London with leaders of contemporary opinion, with the representatives of the working classes, with journalists or with students in the revolutionary stage of adolescence, completely in the shade. Talking to these men, one felt once again a resurgence of faith;

ABOUT EDUCATION

faith in the ability of the human reason to discern the steps that are necessary to the making of a better world, in the disinterestedness of the desire to take the steps which reason discerned and in the determination of the human will to overcome whatever obstacles withstood the realization of the desire.

We think of the public schools as homes of educational obscurantism. Here, according to tradition, Blimps form characters to an accompaniment of, 'impots', 'swishings', Greek grammar and Latin verbs. Intelligence is at a discount and, provided one learns the qualities of leadership, it matters little in what direction one leads. At any rate, direction is one of the things that is not discussed; there are many things that are not discussed. So runs the tradition. No picture of Winchester could be further from the truth and, though Winchester no doubt is a paragon among enlightened public schools, I have discerned the same tendencies, enjoyed similar discussions, been stimulated by a similar idealism at others, at Repton, for example, or at Rugby. But what one chiefly notices about these places is the persistence of a characteristic which is, or was, the peculiar glory of Oxford or Cambridge, the characteristic which, for want of a better word, I call 'blend'.

The Disjunctions of Modern Life

One of the defects of modern civilization—it is a by-product of our increasing specialization—is the disjunction of human faculties, activities and excellences which it entails. There is work and there is leisure; it is taken for granted that the former will not be entertaining or the latter fruitful. In work there is activity; one tends machines, alters the position in space of pieces of matter, makes up accounts, visits the sick, prepares memoranda; in leisure, passivity, that is to say, one pays somebody else to do for one the entertaining which one cannot do for oneself and one passively receives. Or one employs a machine, gramophone, radio, roundabout or car. . . .

There is seriousness and there is humour. Sermons, lectures, and text-books are serious; so are leaders in the newspapers and the speeches of politicians; jokes, comedians, leg-pulling and banter at the bar and 'smutty' stories are humorous. But to wit,

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

the art of being amusing about that which profoundly matters, about religion, for example, or politics, we rarely aspire.

There is life and there is art. Life is what we live; it is an affair of getting and making, of illness and health, of the office and the train, of broken bootlaces, opportunities missed or taken and strenuous endeavour. It is real and earnest and serious and it has no place for beauty. Art is an affair of picture galleries and concerts; sometimes, though very rarely, of poetry readings. It is, we realize, in some way concerned with beauty and ever and again, in a picture gallery, at a concert, more often, perhaps, as we climb a mountain or look at a sunset, we acknowledge the presence of beauty; but art is not real, it is not serious and emphatically it has nothing to do with life.

Again, there are people and there are books. People are an inevitable accompaniment of life; they are there for company, for competing with, for playing games with, for doing things in common with, for overreaching and getting the better of and for falling in love with and marrying and being jealous of; finally, they are for dying and burying; but, for most of us, they are not for discussing books with. Books are for three things; for learning dull subjects, so that we may pass examinations and get degrees; for studying, in order that we may the better pursue our hobbies—growing better onions, making a longer cast, knowing when to double at bridge; or for passing the time when we are bored. We read these last as we drink coffee, take drugs or eat chocolate, because we want stimulating or soothing or titillating, or because we have nothing better to do. But books have no relation to real life and emphatically they are not for discussing with real people.

One could add almost indefinitely to the list of these disastrous disjunctions between reason and emotion, between the body—games, food, and love for weekdays—and the spirit—religion and no love for Sundays—between laughter and seriousness, intelligence and affection—‘he is a fool that marries’ says Wycherley, ‘but a greater that does not marry a fool’—between society and nature. They are at once the origin and the reflection of the fatal split in our lives, as the result of which the different departments of the self are devoted to the pursuit of different

ABOUT EDUCATION

activities. The consequence is lack of integration. We are either working or playing, laughing or being serious; exercising the body or using the mind; what is worse, most of us come at last to do one or other of these things to the exclusion of the rest, the consequence being that the Greek ideal of the fully developed human being with his sound mind and his sound body has given place to the bruiser all fist, the film star all face and legs and the athlete all legs, or to the bespectacled scholar incapable alike of knocking in a nail or digging in the garden, or to the business man all heartiness, drinks and stories, ever mixing but never fusing, with nothing in his head and death in his heart; or to his wife, so full of cordiality, so incapable of intimacy, such a friend to ready laughter, such a stranger to tenderness. Or we make the worst of all worlds and produce citizens with the heads of athletes on the bodies of thinkers. . . .

The Specialists

Or we become specialists; scientist-specialists, for example, in regard to whom we do not know whether the more to admire the careful method, the scrupulous accuracy, the patient industry, the whole-hearted devotion to truth illuminated by moments of insight that characterize their activities in the laboratory, or the simple-minded gullibility of their attitude to politics, to the Press, or to society. Take them out of their accustomed environment and invite them to discharge the duties of an alert, critical, active-minded citizen and they behave for all the world like bees transferred from the hive to the window pane. Or there is the great and growing company of sociologico-politico-economico-mass-observing specialists, at once the compilers and the consumers of Blue books, statistical records, graphs, charts, memoranda, sample-consumer-inquiry reports; these things are their meat and drink and their powers both of production and consumption fill us with envy. But go with them for a walk—as likely as not, they will turn up in hats, black shoes, waistcoats and overcoats—show them growing crops, ask them the names of hedgerow flowers in spring, or take them across country through a gate, across a field, over a hedge into a wood, through a farmyard and so over a stile and into the road again, and you would think that

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

they had forgotten the use of most of their five senses, so ignorant are they of what most men have always known, so completely oblivious of country sights and sounds, so ruthless in the pursuit of argument, so unremitting in their conveyance of information; or that they had lost the art of the natural management of the human body, so unhandy are they at gate or stile or barbed wire fence. Many of my Socialist friends belong to this class; beginning life as Bohemians, they have ended as researching clerks and their Socialism which was once a gospel of long hair and red ties has become an affair of red tape and safety razors. They used with great industry to avoid producing children; they now with scarcely less succeed in producing Blue books.

All these are in very different ways examples of specialization; they exemplify the consequences of a way of life which results from a failure in what I have called 'blend'. As a result they are men and women partially developed; or their development is departmentalized, or, while many sides of their nature may have been developed, they have been developed separately and without relation, as a man will respect his wife without desire and lust after his mistress without respect. All illustrate in various ways the effects of modern education, which after the age of sixteen is increasingly devoted to the production of specialists.

The Red Brick Universities

As I write, there comes to my mind a memory of my first visit to Birmingham. I was in my last year at Oxford, the Oxford of 1913-14, drenched in the atmosphere of the place and, as I now realize, a little bemused with its beauty. Though I can never have been so ingenuous as consciously to have formulated the demand, I suppose that in my secret soul I must have expected that all the other Universities would be more or less like Oxford. I was one of a team of three sent by the Oxford Fabian Society, then in the heyday of its first propagandist flowering, to debate with the Fabians of Birmingham University. I stayed with a young Socialist lecturer in a small, red brick villa somewhere near Selly Oak. That red brick villa was my first shock; to reach it, one took a long tram

ABOUT EDUCATION

journey through miles of squalor and it was as bright as a new pin and as raw as a new wound. Not all the books that crowded the shelves could dim that brightness or mellow that rawness; in fact, in their gay new wrappings—they enhanced them. They were the 1914 equivalents of the productions of the Left Book Club; books by Philip Snowden, Jim Larkin, George Lansbury and Keir Hardie. There were pamphlets dealing with the outrageous case of the Trade Union leaders deported from South Africa. There were Suffragette pamphlets and Syndicalist pamphlets and, of course, there were Shaw and Wells and Samuel Butler and Galsworthy and Hardy and Chesterton and D. H. Lawrence. The lecturer was a clever, comparatively civilized chap, but his wife I remember to have been a very ordinary middle class girl, who fed us on high tea, made genteel conversation and when she drank, curved her little finger as far as possible from the side of the contaminating teacup. After tea the lecturer took us out to see the rabbits hatched in a little square of garden at the back. We had cocoa and biscuits before going to bed.

That long tram ride, that villa, so unlike the don's rooms with which Oxford had familiarized me, that genteel conversation, as if we all had metaphorical plums in our mouths, the rabbits and the cocoa came, for me, to symbolize the content for which the Red Brick University stood and stands. The forbidding building of grimed red brick—Birmingham University had not yet moved to the fine new structure outside the City,—served only to confirm the impressions of the villa. Let me try very briefly to sum up these impressions, setting them more particularly against the background of the Oxford and Cambridge scenes by which inevitably my standards had been formed.

First, vocationalism; the object of the student was to learn how to earn his living, not how to achieve a life worth living.

Secondly, specialization; the student did not equip himself, as the Greats School at Oxford equips a man, to earn his living in any one of half a dozen different ways. He was preparing himself to earn it in one particular way; as chemist, for example, as engineer, or as veterinary surgeon.

Thirdly, against such a background any non-utilitarian

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

activity or pursuit, must if it was to survive at all, affirm itself assertively, even defiantly. Hence, the debating Society, the discussion group, the poetry Society, the drama Society and other cultural expressions of student activity, struck one as artificial plants transplanted from the more congenial climates of Oxford and Cambridge, rather than as natural growths rooted in the organic life of the place. The majority of students, absorbed as they are in the struggle to obtain a degree, did not attend them; those who did, did so with an air of bravado, as of men asserting a right or performing a ritual in an environment of apathy or disapproval.

Games and Geography

The bodies that inhabited Red Brick left an impression not less distinctive than the minds. At Oxford and Cambridge the facilities for games playing are on one's doorstep. The river washes the College Backs, the playing fields are a few hundred yards down the road; they are smooth and their grass is shaven. It is the easiest and the most natural thing in the world to play your game in the afternoon and then back to College for a bath, tea in somebody's room with hot anchovy toast, to be followed—such is the effect of the combination of releasing and expanding influences flowing from these things—by the best talk that most of us enjoy at any time of our lives. This is talk which lasts from tea to dinner in the course of which the bottom is knocked out of the universe, the foundations of new social systems are laid, the lids are taken off the secret selves of self and friends, the stars reached for and on occasion grasped. It is haunted throughout by the thought of the work which one is neglecting, the essay to be written, the notes to be 'mugged up', and the slight feeling of guilt enhances the enjoyment.

At the Red Brick Universities the fields are, for the most part, two or three miles away and are travelled to by tram or bus. In these circumstances only the professional 'hearties' play. (We are at one of the roots here of that cleavage between the physically under-developed intellectual and the physically over-developed 'hearty', which is so pervasive a characteristic of the English student scene.) When the game is over, they

ABOUT EDUCATION

disperse after a rapid shower in the basement to their homes. There is no development or extension to other spheres of the new social consciousness born of the power which team games have to break down the barriers between separate individualities.

Fifthly, there is the question of travelling. For what I have said about dispersal after games raises matters of more general application, raises, in fact, the question of geography. A Red Brick University is set in the alien environment of an industrial town. (Exceptions are Nottingham and Birmingham which, in recent years, have escaped to the outskirts.)

Two important results follow. First, the atmosphere which greets the student as he leaves his University is alien to learning and the things of the mind; is, in fact, the atmosphere of men who are governed not by the things of the mind but the things of the stomach and the pocket. Pervaded by this atmosphere, the student tends to think of culture and learning not as things valuable in and for themselves, but as tools indispensable for the adequate filling of the stomach and the pocket; they are, for him, not ends but instruments.

Secondly, he lives not in common with other students on the premises but with his family at a distance; travels from a distance and, when his day's work is over, must travel again to reach his home. Hence, those goods which, at Oxford and Cambridge where one lives and learns and eats and plays *in situ*, are easily and at all times accessible, discussion Societies and the company of friends, a cup of cocoa, or a glass of beer with one's next door neighbour before going to bed, those sudden, inexplicable but immensely delightful chance herdings of the young, are difficult of attainment and precarious when attained; they are not the expressions of impulse but the products of planning ahead and the planning ahead with its inevitable interval robs them of spontaneity.

In a Red Brick University the young are always dispersing, flying apart like the spokes of a wheel to the perimeter on which their parents live. It is difficult in the face of these centrifugal tendencies to generate that living spirit of the College as a corporate entity which is so marked a feature of Oxford and Cambridge life.

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Extreme Disability of Geography

Consider, for example, the case of my own college, Birkbeck. This College is attended in the evening by students who are for the most part engaged in salaried employment during the day. Most of them are just starting to earn their livings and are, therefore, comparatively poor; but they are paying for their education themselves, so that they are comparatively enthusiastic. They attend lectures, work hard and manage to convey an impression of spontaneous, vigorous life which sharply distinguishes them from the students attending the average Red Brick university. 'If they can be like this', I have said to myself, 'under the disabilities of their lot, the disabilities of bread-winning, the disabilities of fatigue and geography, what would they be, if the disabilities were removed?' For consider these disabilities. Owing to the size of London, the students spend a large part of their day being mailed like parcels from one part of the town to another in the trains, buses, tubes, or trolley buses which London's spreading wilderness of suburbanity and conurbanity has called into existence as necessary adjuncts of living. I once taught a student who lived with an invalid mother at Ealing and herself taught at a school at West Ham. To reach West Ham from Ealing involved an hour's travelling in the morning. Her schoolday over, she hurried back to Ealing—another hour—in order to prepare a meal for her mother and herself. Immediately the meal was finished, she started out again, this time for the centre of London, in order to attend a lecture at the College at seven; at nine she was off home again having spent a minimum of four and a maximum of five hours out of every twenty-four in travelling. (Why did she put herself to so much trouble, and to not inconsiderable expense in order to attend my lectures? I have already in a general sense answered this question; because she wanted a degree and thought that the lectures would help her to pass the necessary examination. Why did she want a degree? Because she wanted to cease to be a teacher and considered a degree to be an indispensable stepping stone out of the teaching profession. Why did she want to cease to be a teacher? The answer is given in Chapter III.)

ABOUT EDUCATION

This, no doubt, is an extreme case but there are hundreds like it.

The Effects of Geography on College Life

You would not expect in the circumstances that College life would be either intense or vigorous. The debates, discussions and informal talks; the big occasions when the politician comes to address the students, the play and the rehearsals for the play, the poetry reading and the concert practice—these things must be attended and conducted by students who have already done a day's work, been present at a couple of lectures and have half an hour or an hour to spare before journeying to a suburb, which they reach between 11 and 12 at night, with the prospect of getting up at 7.30 the following morning.

It is astonishing in the circumstances how vigorous it does in fact contrive to be; so much so, that I have sometimes been tempted to wonder whether the way to make education popular may not be to make it difficult of attainment, just as the way to make Christians faithful is to persecute them for their faith. It is, indeed, a fact that public lectures in the College theatre were never so crowded as in the days when the blitz had robbed us of a part of our roof and snowflakes fell upon the listening audience.

The College lies in the city; the playing fields are at Greenford in the territory of the Great West Road ten miles away. To reach them from the College takes an hour in tube and bus and costs one and threepence. Only the keenest—Nature's athletes—face the rigours of this journey. Nor, under the circumstances, is a general attendance to be expected. Practising at the nets on a summer's evening is no joke if you must spend an hour or more travelling to your ten minutes at the wickets. In the winter there is only Saturday afternoon, since on a weekday games are out of the question. What, meanwhile, has been happening to that equal exercise of the mind and the body, that careful and harmonious development of every side of our being which the Greeks and ourselves praised and praise in theory and for which our public schools and older Universities make provision in practice, even if the mind is on occasion slightly sidetracked in the practice? It has disappeared from the

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS curriculum. The few play games self-assertively and rate the many for indolence because of their refusal to co-operate. The many pass, unexercised, from their student to their adult life.

The Sense of Beauty in the Young

Whether the young have souls or not is a matter of opinion, but that they lack that particular experience of the soul which we later know as the sense of beauty there can, I should imagine, be no two opinions. By and large, children have no sense of beauty; of brightness, of gaiety, of colour, no doubt; of excitement and adventure, assuredly; of wonder or mystery, perhaps; but to that peculiar emotion at once unanalysable and unique with which we respond to the manifestation of beauty in sound, or paint, or stone, in steel, or film, or words, they are strangers. The sense of beauty does not grace the lives of most of us until the age of puberty is reached. It is not until after the gangster stage, which for most Anglo-Saxon youths lasts from eleven to fifteen, has been passed, that the eyes of the soul are opened and the boy reads poetry, listens to music, and sees nature not as trees to climb, or as a living museum of bugs and birds' eggs, but sensuously as form and shape and sound and colour and scent; that he becomes, in a word, sensitive to beauty.

Psychologists have laid stress on the supremely formative effects of the first five years of life. They may be right. But I do not see how they can be sure. For we do not remember the first few years of life—not even when under the pressures of the psycho-analyst's consulting room we are driven to invent the memories which we cannot recall—and I do not see, therefore, how we can tell whether they were really important or not. We can, of course, as professional psychologists, trace undesirable traits in the characters of our patients to events that happened in their first few years. But they always *are* undesirable. It is never those things of which our species is entitled to feel proud, the traits and talents in which the specific excellence of mankind is to be found—the ability to know beauty, to search for truth, to respond to the call of duty, to commune with God—which are traced to some discernible origin in the nursery or the cot, at the breast or in the womb. Now it is in these specific and distinguishing excellences of humanity that

ABOUT EDUCATION

I conceive the value of our species to consist, and it is not until after the age of sixteen that, among the Anglo-Saxon races, they begin to develop. No doubt we are part human and not wholly animal even in our earliest years, but I doubt if, had all human beings died at the age of twelve, the fact would have been recognized. For whatever we may be in those as yet hidden souls of ours, our behaviour until the age of fourteen has been reached and passed is that of the flock, the herd or the tribe, living by habits, moved by incomprehensible emotions, given to strange rituals and thinking in terms of totems and symbols.¹

Of the changes that manifest themselves once this chrysalis stage is passed, not the least is sensibility to beauty. At eighteen the soul begins to open; one reads, often writes, poetry, hears music as it were for the first time, and begins to look at the prints of old Masters.

Early Aesthetic Experiences

I remember in vivid detail the beginnings of aesthetic sensibility in myself. I developed late aesthetically. I was too busy working away at my books to pass examinations and win scholarships to have time and energy for the development of the spirit; too busy talking and thinking to afford to be idle and to listen. My school encouraged me to develop only my body and, consumed by an ambition to go to Oxford, I drove away privately at the exercising of my mind. Between the two the spirit was left out. For the spirit—what was that? At my backward Public School we had not heard of it and it was not until I was nineteen and installed at Oxford that by faltering and haphazard steps beauty came straying into my life. (I did not recognize it at the time for what it was, but I knew afterwards.) Somebody was practising the last movement of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata—the eighth, Opus 13, No. 1 (I learnt the Opus number later. Why, incidentally, will somebody not take in hand the job of tidying up the business of musical numerology, so that every distinct piece of music bears

¹ I am told by teachers that there is a little flicker, a sort of false dawn, of the soul at about the age of ten or eleven; it persists for a year and is then extinguished.

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

its single Opus number assigned to it, so far as our knowledge permits, chronologically?—in the room immediately above mine. The music was being practised, not played, which meant that I heard over and over again that plaintive phrase in the minor key with which the Rondo begins. It was the fact of *répétition* that broke the barriers and unsealed my sense. Or—an experience of a different sort—I was walking back to Oxford along the Leys from Bablock Hythe on an evening in June at the end of my first summer term. It was very still and quiet and the Long Leys where I was walking were rich with a great variety of colour, sound, and scent. It was one of those walks made memorable by some chance juxtaposition, a meeting point of place and season and one's own subjective mood, as if something inside oneself had been waiting for just that moment that it might be touched off and spring to consciousness. This is not the place in which to indulge in reminiscences of early aesthetic experience. I mention these two in order to illustrate two points: first, these experiences come to most of us only at maturity after a certain kind of training and experience has prepared us to receive them. If a boy has never lived in the presence of beauty—that the beauty has not been consciously recognized is no matter, provided that it has been present to the senses—if, for example, he has spent his life in a mining village, I doubt if his spirit will have reached the right degree of receptiveness for the enjoyment of the beauty of the Long Leys. It is as if Nature must long knock unheeded at the portals of the soul, before we are able to hear her and open to receive her.

Secondly, that which was, as I have put it, 'touched off' does not sink back into unconsciousness. On the contrary, the memory of the experience remains for the permanent enrichment of one's conscious being, while the capacity for similar experiences is enlarged. It is, indeed, as if one had acquired a new sense, a sense which develops with what it feeds on. Thus, aesthetic experience amplifies the being, so that he who enjoys it is literally a richer man, able to touch life at more points and to obtain from it a greater variety of spiritual sustenance than the man who is a stranger to it; just as a sighted man is richer than a blind.

ABOUT EDUCATION

The Sense of Beauty at the Red Brick Universities

Now, in the Red Brick Universities aesthetic experience comes but rarely and with difficulty. I do not mean that there are no music, no pictures, no poetry and no beauty; I mean that these are things apart and, because they *are* apart, they must be deliberately sought out by the aesthetically minded young, precisely because they are not interwoven with the normal texture of their lives. And since things deliberately sought out tend to be things defiantly sought out, the aesthetes tend to become a group apart, self-consciously flaunting their superior aesthetic insight, objects of suspicion and contempt to the normals which they repay in kind.

At Oxford and Cambridge one is surrounded by the visible loveliness of the places; there are also invisible influences by which the very texture of existence is pervaded. These together form an atmosphere by which dwellers in the Universities are unconsciously impregnated; and just as a fire of leaves in autumn may smoulder for hours and then break suddenly into flame, so, as one goes about one's business in their streets and courts and meadows, one may find one's senses suddenly unsealed and one's spirit flaming out to meet the beauty with which one is surrounded.

But nobody in his comings and goings to and from the University buildings in Manchester is subjected to influences which will prepare his soul for the kindling of the aesthetic spark. Nor does the aesthetic spark in fact kindle.

This is not to say that the young men of Manchester University have no souls; still less, that they do not respond to beauty. Far from it. My point is merely that the experience of beauty does not come to them naturally and normally as part of the lives which they live as University students. The atmosphere in which they work is not pervaded by it nor does it come unsought to grace their activities.

Return from Digression

And so I come back to the question of 'blend'. It is only at Oxford and Cambridge, I am asserting, and at our larger public schools that the many good things of which I have

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
spoken are to be found together; I come back, too, to the garden at Winchester to remind myself that beauty goes with them.

It has been a long digression, yet not wholly valueless, since in the course of its wanderings the argument has gathered certain conclusions by the way. Before these are fully viewed I have some qualifications to introduce and omissions to confess.

Qualifications and Omissions

First, as to the qualifications. I have deliberately not dwelt on those things which are amiss at our public schools. This has been done time and again in the last two decades and I do not wish to retread ground that is so well worn. I remind myself in passing that I have said nothing of my own public school, admittedly a barbarous one; of the lazy, senile men who taught us, of the bullying and underfeeding, of the worship of the gods of the football and cricket fields, of their brutality and of the brutality of their hangers on—though by the way the best footballers and cricketers were often gentle fellows and not always mindless, so I emphasize 'their hangers on'; of the misery of those unfortunate boys in whom brain was more pre-eminent than brawn and of the alternately kickings to which we were subjected when there was no immediate use for us and cajolings when there were exercises to be done or unseens to be construed; of forms that were a cross between a rugby scrum and a zoo—almost literally a zoo, for there was one form in which boys amused themselves by imitating simultaneously the noises of every animal known to natural history by way of relieving the tedium of being taught French grammar by a helpless French master—or of the scar which I still carry on my own temple from the impact of a heavy inkpot flying through the air to hit my head as I timidly intruded it through the door, an unwilling emissary from my own master to his next door neighbour, charged to convey his compliments and his suggestion that, while Mr. X's management of Mr. X's class was no business of his, nevertheless he could not refrain from pointing out that his own work was being impeded by the uproar coming through the wall from the next door classroom; the inkpot was one of a dozen missiles flying at that moment through the air, while the master sat at his desk with his head

ABOUT EDUCATION

no bullying here now,' would lead one to suppose. Head boys, I suspect, always did make that sort of remark to visitors.

I see that I have betrayed myself into speaking of the very qualifications which I made a merit of passing over. I hasten, then, to the omissions and point out that together with the vices I have omitted to mention most of the celebrated virtues of our public schools. I have said nothing of the training of character or the production of leaders. I don't like leaders, they always imply 'led', and in the nature of things except, perhaps, among French politicians, there are more led than leaders; of the manners that make men; of the games on the playing fields of Eton that were never lost until they were ended; of loyalty, fair play, team spirit, the side and not the individual, and all the rest of it. . . .

I have omitted all these 'virtues' for the same reason as I have omitted the vices, since the former, like the latter, have been made familiar to us in a hundred books by the advocates and detractors of the great public school system.

I concentrate, then, on the one virtue which is relevant to the issues raised in this chapter, the virtue of 'blend'.

The Splits in Modern Civilization

I am maintaining that at the best of our public schools and at Oxford and Cambridge it is possible harmoniously to develop every side of one's nature and that this, broadly speaking, is possible nowhere else. In particular, I am saying that it is not possible at the Red Brick Universities, or, I should imagine—though of these I know little—at most secondary schools. The fact that it is not possible is no fault of the Red Brick University or of the Secondary School. It is the fault of the industrial civilization that produced them and which, inevitably, they reflect. This system has introduced a series of disastrous splits between work and play—you work to make a living, you play to be amused, but it does not occur to you that work can be amusing; between utility and beauty—utility is of the real world; you buy things because they are useful, useful for shaving with or for eating with; build them because they are useful, useful for living in; go to work in the morning because it is useful, useful for making money; provide your son with edu-

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
cation because that is useful, useful for getting a job, that is, for helping other people to make money by utilizing the accomplishments resulting from your son's education; between body, mind and spirit—the body is for eating and drinking and games playing and love making, the mind for planning business deals and getting the better of one's competitors; the spirit is recognized on Sundays and for the rest of the week pensioned off with an occasional grant from the Borough Council for the building of a Picture Gallery, or the underpaying of a librarian.

Whatever took its rise from such a civilization could not but reflect its splits. It must also assume its values. Of these, the most relevant is the utility value of education, the worth of any activity being estimated by reference to the sole standard of whether or not it pays. It was inevitable that education should be referred to the same standard. If you spent money in promoting public health, you did so because a workman continuously going sick diminished production; if you spent money on public education, you did so because the clerk who could do book-keeping, the typist who could spell and punctuate as well as type, increased it. Science, of course, increased it very much; hence, you endowed science.

Praise of the Red Brick Universities

What is interesting is that in the circumstances the Red Brick Universities and the Secondary Schools should have done as much as they have; that they read English literature, study history, even give degrees in philosophy. Why should they do these things? Because, it may be said, of what is politely called the prestige of learning which, being translated, means the snob-value of luxury educational pursuits. (Compare the snob-value of long finger nails in the Chinese or the Victorian lady.) No doubt, but also in part because of the disinterested and persisting love of truth and beauty in the teachers who teach and in the students who listen; disinterested, in spite of the interested motives that begat the institution and determined its nature; persisting, in spite of all the handicaps of poverty, environment, atmosphere and geography. All honour to these teachers and students, for the conclusion of

ABOUT EDUCATION

the matter must be, how gallant is the fight that they have put up against circumstances so adverse.

That, at least, is one conclusion. But another is not less important. It is that because of these circumstances, because of the motives, the atmosphere, the environment and the geography these Universities are by and large precluded from giving a full education simply because in them the good things of which a full education consists, though they may exist separately, are not found in blend. Red Brick Universities lack time and lack space; they lack a continuing tradition; they lack the economic independence which permits their students to embark upon educationally luxurious because commercially useless pursuits. Above all they lack beauty.

The Realization of Potentialities

Now these things are available at our best public schools and at Oxford and Cambridge precisely because these institutions were born of an earlier civilization whose institutions were originated from different motives. Hence, in them there is possible that all round and simultaneous development of body, mind and spirit, that full realization of all the potentialities of the developed being that is not possible elsewhere.

At Eton and Winchester, at Oxford and Cambridge, you can play football and cricket and hockey and fives. You can row; you can ride and you can walk; you are taught to dance; you learn to drink without getting drunk or sick; you learn how to come into a room and, what is not less important, how to get yourself out of it; you learn how to talk to and comport yourself with women. And these things you learn in natural and easy conditions, so that instead of having to be fought for, or travailed for, or turned into occasions of sacrifice or self-denial, they are taken for granted as part of one's normal development.

I have already expressed my conviction that the spirit is awakened only after the age of puberty has been reached and passed. This, I think, is true also of the mind, so far at least as the mind's disinterested functioning is concerned. The desire to know and to understand for understanding's sake; the appetite for ideas and the joy in the play of them; a curiosity as to the origins and the purposes of things and the meaning of

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

this mysterious universe into which we have been pitchforked without so much as a by your leave; a consciousness of the society to which one belongs and its shortcomings and the comparison of these with that ideal society whose outlines one's youthful idealism has already begun to limn—all this and much more which turns the young man into a scholar, a writer, a philosopher, an idealist, a reformer, or a revolutionary, develops at adolescence, grows over a period of from five to ten years, comes to a peak in the early twenties, continues at the peak for three or four years, falters and with most of us disappears with marriage and the cares of a career. This blossoming of the mind is better understood and more tactfully encouraged at Eton and Winchester, at Oxford and Cambridge, with their discussion societies, their political Clubs, their talkings into the small hours over the fire, their papers and essays and College journals, their chatter of new books, their cliques and *côteries*, than anywhere else in the country.

No precise recipe for the refining and enriching of the spirit is known. We do not know how to make a man better and we do not know how to open his eyes to beauty. What we can do is to acquaint him with what the great moral and religious teachers have to tell us about human nature and behaviour as they are and as they ought to be; to remove occasions for stumbling, and then trust that the leaven will in time work in him as in others. In other words, and the words shall be those of religion, we must trust to the merciful intervention of God's grace. Similarly, we can give a young man poetry to read and music to hear; we can set his body in the midst of the visible beauty of the works both of Nature and of man and, what is more to the point, in the midst of the beauty which, as on the Cambridge Backs or in the garden at Winchester, graces the blending of the works of both, and we can trust that these things will work upon his soul, remembering Plato's teaching that a soul takes the colour and shape of its environment and that, if it grows among graceful sights and harmonious sounds, it will itself become graceful and harmonious. For the well-nurtured youth is one 'who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would hate the ugly even from his earliest

ABOUT EDUCATION

years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart'.

It is precisely this kind of influence which is brought to bear upon the growing youth at our older public schools and Universities. The noble Chapels and the lovely singing, the almost palpable atmosphere that the centuries of piety and devotion have distilled—these things dispose the soul to attend to what is righteous, to revere what is holy and to abase itself before what is worshipful. The lovely buildings, the great trees the quiet gardens, the lawns—all old things these, for when did our civilization create beauty?—constitute the fitting environment for the stimulation and development of the sense of beauty.

The Greek Ideal

The result is that the finest flowers of the public school system—I am speaking deliberately of these and not of the standard product, still less of its hundred and one perversions and distortions—achieve a perfection of young manhood that I believe to be unequalled elsewhere. It was, I think, Lowes Dickinson who said that 'an unspoilt youth of twenty with his mind just waking up and his feelings all fresh and open to good is the most beautiful thing this world produces'.

It is pre-eminently the Greek ideal that Lowes Dickinson is praising. And it is this that I, too, have had in mind throughout the foregoing sketch.

For it is by this standard, the standard of the Greek ideal, that the products of Oxford and Cambridge excel and by the same ideal that the products of the Red Brick Universities fall short. The best illustrative account known to me of the modern version of this ideal is contained in the early chapters of John Buchan's autobiography, *Memory holds the Door*, in which he describes the life of that last generation of aristocrats for whom Oxford was a comparatively closed preserve. It was a generation distinguished, he tells us, 'both for its scholars and its athletes, but it made no parade of its distinction, carrying its honours lightly, as if they fell to it in the ordinary process of nature. It delighted unpedantically in things of the mind,

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

but it had an engaging youthfulness, too, and was not above high-jinks and escapades. . . . We reserved our chief detestation for Worldly Wisemen. To think of a career and to be prudent in laying its foundations was in our eyes the unpardonable sin —a revolt no doubt against the Jowett tradition. It was well enough to be successful if success could be achieved unostentatiously and carried lightly, but there must be no appearance of seeking it. Again, while affectionate and rather gentle with each other, we wore a swashbuckling manner to the outer world. It was our business to be regardless of consequences, to be always looking for preposterous adventures and planning crazy feats, and to be most ready for a brush with constituted authority. All this, of course, was the ordinary high spirits of young men delighting in health and strength, which happily belong to the Oxford of every generation. The peculiar features of our circle were that this physical exuberance was found among men of real intellectual power, and that it implied no corresponding *abandon* in their intellectual life.'

That was in 1898. But even in my own time, a dozen years later, when democracy was already knocking at the gates of the citadel it was so soon to capture, some faint aftermath of the Greek sunset could be observed. At Balliol, in 1911 there was a group of young men centring upon the Grenfells and John Manners, many of whom were killed in the last war, who took it for granted that they should row in the College boat, play hockey or rugger for the College or even for the University, act for the O.U.D.S., get tight at College Gaudies, spend part of the night talking in the company of their friends, while at the same time getting their scholarships and prizes and Firsts in Greats. The First in Greats was taken, as it were, in their stride; what is more, it was taken for granted that it should be taken in their stride. I have not seen such men before or since. It may be that they were the last representatives of a tradition which died with them. . . .

Some Conclusions. I. Principles

Let me assume that I have carried my reader with me to the extent of persuading him to share my view that the kind of human being I have so inadequately described and the kind

ABOUT EDUCATION

of life I have so briefly sketched are desirable, and that the system of education of which they are the end products is also desirable. Then I take leave to remind him of an ideal formulated in an earlier chapter and to point out that what I have said is no more than an elucidation of its content. The third object of education, was, I suggested, the drawing out of the latent potentialities of a personality, so that it might be enabled to come to the full development proper to its kind, as a good gardener will seek to bring the plants under his care to the fullest perfection of which they are capable. They, like the products of a good education, are to be good specimens of their own kind.

I am suggesting now that this full development is of the mind, of the body and of the spirit. I add that it must be a blended development, no one of these three being nurtured in isolation from, or at the expense of the others, and I observe that this blended development is broadly speaking possible only at the best of our public schools and at the two older Universities. I permit myself, further, to recall to the reader a principle also announced in an earlier chapter, the principle, namely, that all children should be given by the community an equal opportunity of developing their talents and realizing what they have it in them to be; an equal opportunity, then, of profiting by the kind of education which a public school and, if I am right, a public school alone can bestow. I take leave to add—also on the basis of an earlier discussion—that another of the purposes of education should be to train a man for citizenship, that all classes in the community may be given the chance to share in the government and leadership of their community.

II. Practice

The acceptance of these ideals and principles leads to certain practical corollaries:

- (1) Many contend that we should 'do away with' the public schools; they urge with truth that the public school system segregates the children of the wealthier classes between the ages of ten and eighteen, gives them a special kind of training and so perpetuates the division of the English into two nations.

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

They propose, therefore, to abolish the system because of its social undesirability. I agree; but to extend the demand for the abolition of the *system* to the abolition of the schools themselves would be to falsify the principles I have tried to preach in this chapter. Social justice demands not that the public schools should be abolished, but that a proportion of the boys of the next generation, larger than at present and more fairly selected should go to them. What does 'more fairly selected' mean? Selected by reference solely to their ability to derive benefit from the education which public schools, by virtue of their inherited traditions of teaching and standards of learning and scholarship are enabled to give; not, therefore, selected by the accident of birth or of the possession by the boy's parents of a substantial balance at the bank.

Proposals by the Public Schools

At this point caution demands a digression. Under stress of present circumstances and fear of future slumps some public schools—I do not know whether the proposal has received the endorsement of the Headmasters' Conference—are proposing to offer a certain number of free places to boys from secondary schools—they are even, I gather, prepared in certain circumstances to take boys direct from primary schools—in return for a State grant and at the cost of the acceptance of a larger degree of State supervision. One can imagine the considerations which, consciously or unconsciously, underlie this proposal running somewhat as follows: (a) 'We shall never be able to keep up our numbers in the post-war world, since the class upon which we have been accustomed to draw for our boys will be too impoverished to afford our fees. Even as things are, many, as we know, are already using up capital in order to send us their sons. (b) Apart from this, there is, we understand, a growing body of feeling in the country which is hostile to our system. We are considered to be undemocratic. If, then, there is a swing to the Left in the years after the war and a Labour Government that really means business comes to power, we may find ourselves in danger of being taken over by the State. (c) Therefore, in order to meet, or rather to avoid, trouble half-way, we should offer now to take a number of

ABOUT EDUCATION

boys from State or State-aided schools up to, say, a quarter or a third of our total numbers. The State will pay us for them and our atmosphere and traditions plus snobbery, plus the influence of the other three-quarters (or two thirds) of our boys, will enable us easily to assimilate them. (d) By this method we shall ensure for ourselves a regular supply of paid-for pupils, thus at the same time overcoming difficulty (a) and giving convincing proof to the world of our ability to move with and meet the needs of a democratic age. Meanwhile, we shall have taken the dangerous edge off the hostility which, we are told, it entertains for us and all that we stand for.'

This reasoning is anti-social and the proposal in which it issues is reactionary. Its effect would be to cream off, generation after generation, the upper layer of working-class ability to transfer it to a different social stratum and there to sterilize it. To sterilize it means to draw its potential political sting, since the socially promoted members of the working classes are apt to be more royalist than the king. Anxious to forget their origin that they may the more effectively remove its traces, they seek by every method that snobbery may suggest and assiduity master to identify themselves more closely with the class to which their education has elevated them. The effect would be not only to perpetuate the division of the country into two nations but to draw off from the larger but non-governing nation whatever in the way of talent or ability might have enabled it to become the governing nation; or, better still, enabled it to heal the split between governed and governing nations.

(2) Granted that all boys whose ability enables them to profit by it are to be given the chance to go to public schools; granted, further, that most boys cannot afford the fees, then the principles laid down in chapter three demand that their fees be paid by the community. If the community pays, the community must control. The public schools, then, must be integrated with the other schools of the country, so that instead of two systems of education existing side by side, (a) the system of State and State-aided schools, mainly non-boarding and mainly free and (b) the system of public and preparatory schools, usually boarding, always expensive, and offering a

OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

socially superior brand of education, there will be only one system.

(3) The staffing of schools belonging to this single system is covered by suggestions for the training and provision of teachers set out in chapter four.

(4) The question of the selection of pupils falls next to be considered. In Mr. Butler's Education Act the State has undertaken:

(a) To extend secondary schooling to the age of sixteen within a period (not specified) after the end of the war.

(b) To give part-time education, mainly non-vocational, in young people's colleges from the ages of sixteen to eighteen, to the extent of not less than one whole day or two half days a week in the employer's time.

The Bill makes no provision for full-time education for those leaving school at sixteen in addition to that which is already provided in grammar and public schools which must still be paid for, however intellectually able the pupils may be. Yet, if the principles set out in chapter three are not to be infringed, such provision must obviously be made. Where can it more effectively be made than at the public schools?

I suggest, then, that all boys leaving secondary schools at sixteen, who can profit by public school education, proceed to public schools.

But, it will be said, the abolition of the financial bar will substantially increase the numbers eligible for public school education, with the result that there will not be enough public schools to accommodate all the boys who will flow into them on leaving the secondary schools at sixteen. I agree that there will not be enough if the existing period of public school life be retained. But why should it be retained? At present about 2 per cent of the adult population go to public schools for five or four years, from thirteen or fourteen to eighteen. I suggest that a considerably larger population, say 6 or 7 per cent, go for two or at most three years, from sixteen to eighteen plus. The numbers which will actually be involved make such a proposal far from impracticable. In 1938 there were about 28,000 boarders in public schools in England and Wales and about 39,000 boys over the age of sixteen in secondary schools

ABOUT EDUCATION

in England and Wales. All the 28,000 would not qualify by ability and interest to profit by public school education; most, perhaps, would not. On the other hand many of the 39,000 would. We shall, therefore, have between 50,000 and 60,000 to accommodate for from two to three years instead of 28,000 for from four to five years. I suggest, then—but the suggestion owns much better authority than mine, notably that of R. H. Tawney—that the public schools be taken over by the State and used as boarding schools to accommodate for two or three years the intellectually abler secondary school boys from the ages of sixteen to eighteen, the rest of these boys going, as at present proposed, into Young People's Colleges.

Eton and Winchester

(5) The proposal entails a corollary. The injustice of sending intellectually able boys to public schools and then abruptly terminating their education at eighteen is obvious. It follows that their education must be continued through the University stage. For the reasons indicated in this chapter it cannot be effectively continued at the Red Brick Universities. Apart from any other consideration, these suffer, as things are, from the stigma of social inferiority with which it is important to avoid branding the intellectually able. Yet Oxford and Cambridge, already over-full, cannot take further entrants and retain their existing characteristics. I propose, then, following the suggestion of my friend, Ivor Thomas, that two of the older public schools, Winchester and Eton, should be utilized for this purpose becoming, in fact, an additional Oxford and an additional Cambridge. Socially Winchester and Eton can look Oxford and Cambridge in the face. Their prestige is not less, while their antiquity is greater than that of some of the newer colleges at the older Universities. Their traditions of teaching can meet the challenge of the ablest mind; their playing fields afford adequate scope for the exercise of the body; their beauty should stimulate and refine the developing spirit. Hence in the formative years from eighteen to twenty-two during which, in my view, the foundations of the good life are laid, there is no place in the country at which they can be better laid than at Winchester or at Eton.

Chapter Five

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

The Menace of Brave New World

One of the purposes of the discussion in chapter two was to establish the importance of the education of adults. The education of adults, I affirmed, is necessary to prevent the post-war world from becoming a *Brave New World* using the term in the sense Aldous Huxley has given to it in his famous novel. If, in the world after the war, people's leisure is to be increased and if they are to be given holidays with pay, then it is essential that preparations should be made so to train their capacities that they may use their leisure to advantage, and so to cultivate their tastes that their holidays may be a source of enjoyment and not of tedium. It is no fairer to give them holidays without tastes, than it is to give them responsibility without power.

Only education can provide this preparation; in its absence, people will be thrown helpless upon the resources of the movies, the radio, dog racing, dirt track racing, football and football pools, amusement fairs, Butlin camps, and the hundred and one devices, at present mercifully hidden in the womb of the future, with which the ingenuity of commerce will seek to exploit the newly enfranchised leisure of millions, when holidays are not, as they have been hitherto, a mere relief of a week or at most a fortnight a year from the burden of overwork or the tedium of monotonous routine, but are an integral and recurrent part of their lives. Or the masses of the post-war world will swarm over the countryside in cars, seeking in the rapid alteration of the position of their bodies in space a respite from the boredom which invests their stationary leisure.

Before the war 4.8 per cent of the population of this country possessed cars; after the war a mass produced car, selling at between £90 and £100, may well enlarge the figure to the pre-war American percentage of 25 per cent or even 30 per cent. The prospect is not attractive. We have hitherto managed to

ABOUT EDUCATION

support a population of forty-seven million persons in an island which can comfortably hold about eight million, only by penned them closely in cities which we gave them no time to leave, for they had only the five Bank Holidays, their Sundays and sometimes their Saturday afternoons, and no means of leaving if they had had the time, since the level of their wages was not sufficient to support the strain of constant rail and bus fares.

After the war we shall begin to experience, for the first time in our history, the consequences of the unrestricted impact of our swollen population upon our restricted space; for the first time, a large percentage of the forty-seven millions will have the money, the time and the transport facilities to leave the towns and to spread themselves at large over the countryside. Everywhere in the South of England there will be people; there will be no place quiet; nowhere, where a man can sit in peace and call his soul his own. Surely, then, we must so educate people that they no longer identify the good life with the movement of their bodies through the air or over the surface of the earth in mechanisms propelled by petrol? We must educate them, as I began by saying, in order that we and they may be saved from *Brave New World*.

These are general considerations. To them I add two subsidiary ones.

(1) The Studies Suitable for Adults

First, Sir Richard Livingstone has brought forcibly to our attention a truth, emphasized by Aristotle but since forgotten, the truth, namely, that there are certain studies which can only be fruitfully pursued when we have already had personal experience of the subject matter to which they relate. They are pre-eminently the studies which take human beings and their behaviour as their subject matter, namely, history, philosophy and politics and the greater part of what is important in literature.

These, Aristotle pointed out, cannot be fruitfully pursued by the young because they have no experience of the matters to which they relate. 'While a specialist,' Aristotle writes, 'can make judgments as to his own particular subject, it requires

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

a person of all-round education to form competent judgments about things in general. That is why a young man is not a competent student of political science, because he has had no practical experience of the affairs of life.' Aristotle is right.

A young man may learn to recite and may even believe remarks relating to the uneasiness of heads that wear crowns, but, unless he has himself had some experience of the exercise of power, he can have no insight into its full meaning. He may be acquainted with Gibbon's description of history as 'a record of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'; he may even ponder with understanding upon Hegel's remark that 'the only thing men learn from history is that men learn nothing from history' but, unless he has observed statesmen refusing to learn from experience and people's suffering as the result of their refusal, the remark will strike no chord of answering acquiescence in himself. Aristotle's point has, as I say, been admirably remade in Sir Richard Livingstone's *The Future in Education* and I shall not develop it here. The moral of its acceptance is that it is only those who are grown up who can usefully follow the studies that deal with human life and experience.

(2) *The Need for Refreshment*

The second reason is that our minds need to be continuously kept up to date. If our education stops our minds cease to grow, and since a mind cannot stand still, if it does not grow, it dries and withers. Study, disciplined study, preferably under instruction, is the rain to keep it fresh.

I mentioned in the third chapter the need for 'doing up' a teacher every few years, but the need is not peculiar to teachers. We all of us require constant refurbishing, not only that we may keep abreast of contemporary thought, but also that our minds may not slip back and our intellectual processes lapse into desuetude. All this is handsomely recognized in the White Paper published prior to Mr. Butler's Education Act, more particularly in its bearing upon the importance of adult education to the citizen: 'Without provision for adult education the national system must be incomplete . . . the measure of the effectiveness of earlier education is the extent to which in som-

ABOUT EDUCATION

form or other it is continued voluntarily in later life. It is only when the pupil or student reaches maturer years that he will have served an apprenticeship in the affairs of life sufficient to enable him fully to fit himself for service to the community. It is thus within the wider sphere of adult education that an ultimate training in democratic citizenship must be sought.'

What proposals are made for giving effect to this admirable statement of principle?

Proposals of the White Paper

Roughly the proposals made in the White Paper are as follows:

(1) In the plan for education which is outlined for the first four years after the war no provision of any kind is made for adult education and nothing apparently is to be done for the adults during these four years. As the plan does not itself come into operation until eighteen months after the conclusion of hostilities, it must be concluded that no steps are to be taken in regard to adult education for the first five and a half years after the end of the war.

(2) Provision is then made whereby the pre-war expenditure on adult and technical education may be exceeded by 2·7 million pounds only.¹ Before the war the expenditure by the State on adult education alone was roughly £90,200, this being made in the form of direct grants to approved bodies.

Defending this modest estimate, Mr. Chuter Ede, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, said that the reason why the proposed increase in expenditure on adult education was so small was that no new buildings were required for adults. His words are worth quoting: 'The reason that the expenditure shown for adult education is so low is the fact that we do not require new buildings for it . . . it is carried

¹ When the Bill was published, provision was made in a financial memorandum for a substantial increase on the figure of 2·7 millions. The provision for adult and technical education in this memorandum rises from 2·3 millions in the first year to 7·3 millions in the seventh year. The ultimate cost is 8·7 millions, but this again is for *both* adult and technical education.

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

on very largely in existing buildings.' In considering this quotation relevant facts which might be borne in mind are:

(i) That before the war only about one-thirtieth of the adult population received any form of adult education. This, however, is an extremely generous estimate, since it includes students attending every conceivable kind of class from carpentry and rabbit keeping at one end of the scale to philosophy and history at the other.

(ii) That in the classes and lecture courses organized by the W.E.A., by the Universities and jointly by the W.E.A. and the Universities—they are of many different kinds which it would be difficult to remember and tedious to rehearse, but they include pretty well everything in the way of serious non-vocational study—there were in 1943 some 72,000 students, and that the maximum figure achieved in any one peacetime year was just over 60,000, that is to say, one in every six hundred of the adult population.

Let us, in the light of these figures, give further consideration to Mr. Chuter Ede's reason for the lowness of the increased expenditure on adult education, the reason, namely, that no new buildings are required.

Personal Experience of Adult Education

I have been a tutor in the adult education movement for nearly twenty years. Most of my work has been done in Tutorial Classes which are jointly organized by the Universities and by the W.E.A. These are the aristocracy of adult education. They meet for two hours weekly in the evening for twenty-four weeks of the year; the first hour is devoted to a lecture by the tutor, the second to discussion by tutor and students.¹ The student must also do a certain amount of written work and can be turned out of the class by the tutor, if he fails in this matter to come up to the standard required. He must also pledge himself to attend for three years and so on. . . . It will be seen that to join a Tutorial Class is a serious undertaking. Of the figure of seventy-two thousand quoted above, some seven thousand only are in Tutorial Classes and, as I can testify from my own experience, only about one third of those who join

¹ There are many variations from this standard form.

ABOUT EDUCATION

honour their pledge and endure to the end. I have also had some experience in conducting courses organized by the W.E.A. lasting for the six winter months.

As I write, memories come back to me of a bare room, usually a school classroom, lighted by unshaded electric bulbs; it is inadequately warmed, yet at the same time dismally stuffy. Long-legged clerks or bulky miners sit at children's desks; there is nowhere to put the long legs and the bulky forms are uncomfortably squeezed between the edge of the desk and the back of the seat. There are no carpets on the floor and no curtains at the windows; the walls are covered with maps or charts or, sometimes, with pictures of children happy, smiling and sunlit running after balls, chasing butterflies, listening to birds or even to teachers. . . . Or we meet in a chapel and sit in pews; or in a private house and sit, some of us, on the floor; or in the Committee Room of some Trade Union or Labour Party branch, with lists of meetings and statistics of membership on the walls, or even in a room lent by a Government Department. The students arrive sometimes punctually, often late. Most of them have been working all day, often from eight or nine in the morning; some have been home and had a hurried meal; some have had time to change; but most come in their work-a-day clothes, grimed, it may be, with coal dust and stiff with dried sweat. (In order to avoid sitting in class in grimed or sodden clothes, I have known a miner bicycle five miles to his home and then another five miles back to the class, with the prospect of a further five miles home again when the class was over.)

Praise of Adult Students

For many of these students no praise can be too high. For the classes have no vocational value; they will not bring promotion or higher pay; at the best they will polish a man's wits and improve his powers of discussion and argument. But the motive that animates most of the students is not utilitarian, it is educational in the purest sense. These men and women are here to better themselves by acquiring knowledge and culture; and in the face of every conceivable difficulty. They have been at work since eight in the morning and they are tired—I have seen

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

men go to sleep in spite of every effort to keep awake; they have no familiarity with the processes of learning or aptitude in the use of books; they express themselves with difficulty, yet are required to talk; they write badly, making spelling and grammatical mistakes and are shy of giving themselves away, yet must expose their humiliating deficiencies to the possibly censorious eye of a well-educated tutor; above all, they must be prepared to meet in their fellow workers an attitude which is at best indifferent and at worst derisive for there is, the majority think, something a little 'sissy' in a grown-up man giving his evenings to book learning. 'What, going back to school?' they say.

Equally uncomprehending is the girl. She resents the hours subtracted from the time when *he* ought to be taking *her* out. She does not understand. Or she does understand, understands, that is to say, that the man she loves must be humoured—men are only grown-up children after all, with the strange quirks, oddities and enthusiasms of children—but doesn't understand why he should want humouring in this particular way, and has no conception of the value of that for which he sacrifices both himself and her. Or she understands, or thinks she does, only too well in her cunning little mind and joins the class too, to have him under her eye, to see that he does not get into mischief.

These are only a few of the difficulties against which the adult student must contend.

And instead of honouring him and making things easy for him, the State makes them difficult; instead of protecting him from the charge of going back to school, it has so little understanding that it provides only a school for him to go to and then proceeds to justify itself by the assertion, 'we do not require new buildings'.

The Need for Buildings

These are just what we do require and for two reasons. First, the existing facilities are inadequate in themselves; secondly, they tend to make adult education into a thing apart, insulating it from the normal activities of the community.

Adequate buildings are, in the first place, the necessary con-

ABOUT EDUCATION

dition of any education that aspires to be more than a mere inculcation of fact, conveyance of information or promotion of discussion. For lectures and discussions you need only desks, notebooks, pencils, blackboard and lecturer; if you are not a note-taker, you need only a lecturer. But lectures are but a small part of education. Too often they amount to no more than the passage of a certain amount of miscellaneous material from the notebook of the lecturer to the notebooks of the students without passing through the minds of either, while the discussion that follows the lecture, though often pleasant to those who take part in it, rarely extends beyond a small percentage of the class. The majority, who have no practice in the art of self-expression, are silent.

For reading, again, you need only books and quiet. But who shall affirm that reading forms the most essential part of education? For an uneducated person it assuredly does not, since, to read to advantage, you must be already educated. For those whose education ceased at the age of fourteen and who since then have had no practice either in reading or writing and no contact with the things of the mind, much more than lectures or discussions, much more even than books is required. The cinema, the concert, the radio, the 'art' class, the kitchen, the metal shop, the carpentry shop—all these and much more in the same kind are a necessary part of the equipment of an all-round education for adults. Thus, we find the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds demanding in a letter to the *Times Educational Supplement*, 'a large central building with a concert hall and first-class piano, a cinema projector and screen as well as halls for small societies, catering facilities, committee rooms and rooms for discussion groups and class work'.

Our Hall-less Towns

Now all these activities may be most appropriately carried on in a central building devoted to educational activities in the widest sense of the term.

But in many of our towns the war has disclosed the fact that there is not even a hall. When C.E.M.A. began its admirable concerts, when the Ministry of Information began to send out its not always so admirable speakers, it was found that in many

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

parts of England there was literally no place in which they could perform the functions for which they had been sent, no place in which musicians could play and speakers could speak. There were no theatres—four out of every five of the inhabitants of this country had, prior to the war, never seen a play performed by flesh and blood—there were no concert halls; there were no assembly rooms; there were only cinemas. . . . Now anybody who has ever spoken in a cinema knows the deadening effect of the place. It is not merely that the acoustics are abominable, that the audience is often in the dark and cannot be seen; that, even if it could, the first row seems an enormous distance away, too far for the establishment of that sympathetic *rapprochement* between audience and speaker which is necessary to put the latter at his ease and enable him to do his best; that there is no reading desk upon which he can prop his notes, so that he can quote from them without appearing to do so, that there is often not even a table, and that the ludicrous inappropriateness of the environment, so suitable to the movements of the heart so antipathetic to those of the intellect, strikes a chill into the speaker from the moment he walks on to the stage; more to the point than all these things is the condition of the audience. For while *they* are material and of the body, *that* is spiritual and of the soul. It is a condition bordering upon hypnosis. The cinema is traditionally a place in which you take in, take in emotions, thrills, excitement, glamour but emphatically do not give out. There you sit, an enormously receptive sponge, absorbing the emotions that come to you from the screen, holding the hand of the girl beside you with all the faculties of the mind temporarily out of commission; in short, you are conditioned to passivity. Now the effects of conditioning are difficult to shake off and those who visit the cinema for an emotional bath in the dark all the week are unable to rise to the challenge of thinking in the light, when they go to the same cinema on a Sunday to attend a lecture or a class. For, of course it is only on Sundays that the cinema is available. In the week it has more important work on hand than ministering to education; but for some inscrutable reason it is thought wrong that cinemas should be opened on Sundays. It is objected against their Sunday opening that they might

ABOUT EDUCATION

compete with the pubs; or is it perhaps with the churches? And so it comes about that in many towns in the country there is no hall in which a meeting can be held, no centre from which education can radiate. There are only cinemas on Sundays. These are the circumstances in which Mr. Chuter Ede feels enabled to say, 'We do not require new buildings . . . adult education is carried on very largely in existing buildings.' The second part of his statement is true and constitutes one of the reasons why so few are attracted to adult education.

Adult Education in a Vacuum

For, and here is the second reason, it is precisely because adult education is so meanly and precariously housed that the community is led to think so poorly of it, or to think of it not at all. It is because it is given in holes and corners, in class-rooms and committee rooms and chapels and Local Government offices and cinemas, because it has no home of its own and is an incorrigible vagrant and beggar, that adult education makes no real impact upon the life of the community. I have spoken of the vacuum in which education in this country is conducted, of the isolation of educational 'goings on' from the life of the community as a whole, of the undue professionalism of those connected with education and of their inbreeding, of the two teachers' roundabouts and of the creation of castes.

I have now to add that adult education is embraced in the same vacuum. It is emphatically not something that a man takes for granted springing easily and naturally from the context of his social life in the evening, something that he does because his friends are doing it too, something that he can drop in on, as it were, because it is going on just round the corner, or just across the passage. It is a something set apart that sets those who pursue it apart. To believe in it requires an act of faith, to undertake it, an exercise of will, to continue it, a fanatically renewed determination, while to be known to be doing these things stamps a man as an oddity and a crank. For all this, no doubt, there is a more fundamental reason than I have here touched upon. It is to be found in the general attitude of the English to education and the estimate which they place upon it. On this I touched in the first chapter and

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

shall have something to say in the last. A subsidiary reason, however, is circumstantial. It is because adult education has no home and cannot, therefore, be pursued as one of the ordinary avocations of the community, that it is approached with circumspection and by most is not approached at all.

Background of Approval of Village Colleges

How can the vacuum be filled and adult education be brought into the heart of the community's life? The first hint of the right answer to this question was given by Dr. Paton who, writing in 1879, pointed out the absurdity of 'leaving the public school buildings, built at the people's expense, the people's own property, standing just where recreation centres were most needed, standing for the most part dark and untenanted in the evenings with their fine assembly halls, their plenteous classrooms and all the accommodation needed for a palace of delight. Why should they not be full of light and jubilant with song? Why should not the life of the people find its centre there.' Taking Dr. Paton's hint, I answer the question by saying that it is through the establishment of Village Colleges and through the extension of institutions planned on similar lines to the towns.

I venture at this point to break the sequence of abstract argument by a passage of personal recollection. I can best convey the shock of delighted surprise which I received from the first Village College I saw—it was the Impington College—by briefly indicating the background against which I saw it. My father was an H.M. Inspector of Schools, and growing up in an educational atmosphere it was inevitable that I should see something of the schools in which eight out of nine of the children of this country receive their education. My father's district was industrial and I have sought in the last chapter to convey something of the general impression of poverty-stricken drabness which I carried away from the schools I visited in his company. There is no need to recall that impression here. I content myself with quoting Dr. Spencer's considered view that 'about four-fifths of our elementary school premises are hopelessly out of date' and his comment that 'the short black list of schools ought to have been twice as long'.

ABOUT EDUCATION

When I began to earn my living, I acted, as I have explained, for a number of years as tutor to classes organized under the joint auspices of the W.E.A. and the University of London. I have sketched the environment of these classes. In retrospect, I find it difficult to decide whether its discomfort or its ugliness was the most salient feature. There were no easy chairs; carpets, or curtains; the room was often cold and the lighting inadequate; through the walls penetrated the sounds of other classes or, worse still, of practisings by amateur pianists and orchestras. I can remember a whole session which was punctuated by the ill-considered noises made by a young man who in an evil moment had been seized by a desire to master that most difficult of instruments, the bugle.

All this was uncomfortable enough, but worse than the discomfort was the complete lack of any cultural amenity or refining influence. There was nothing that was beautiful, very little that was even agreeable; no hint of a suggestion that education was not a dreary duty no less mortifying to the flesh than to the spirit was permitted to manifest itself. Such was the environment in which adult men and women after a hard day's work devoted their evenings to the attempt to repair the deficiencies of their education. Such, too, was the educational background against which I first saw the Impington College.

The Impington College

It was a large shining building designed by Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry. It was a functional building with clear streaming lines, and when once the eye, bred on fussy decorations and staring pink slate had accustomed itself to its grey simplicity, it was seen to be a very beautiful building. It had been brilliantly planned. While the Assembly Hall, the adult wing and the school were so placed that they could function independently, the three were knit together in an harmonious whole. I vividly remember the noble proportions of the central promenade, one hundred and forty feet in length and twenty feet wide which joined the schoolrooms with the Hall and the adult wing. The entrance to the Assembly Hall is flanked by an avenue of trees. The shining effect is due to the large stretches of glass in wall and roof which glitter in the sunlight.

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Light, air and space are, indeed, the predominant physical characteristics.

Within the College there is first and foremost the Village School—a Senior School for Children from eleven to fourteen; it has a number of classrooms specially designed for the teaching of different subjects; for needlework, for wood-and metal-work, for English, history, geography, art and science. Attached to the school is a large hall—it seats 320—which serves during the day both as the School Assembly Hall and as the Gymnasium but in the evening becomes a dance hall, a theatre—there is a well equipped stage—and a cinema, complete with a projection room at the back. For the Village College is designed to serve adults as well as children and in the evening the adult education classes, the classes which I remember conducting in an environment of dingy back rooms and hard, little desks, are held in comfortable surroundings in well-lighted and well-warmed rooms with padded chairs and gay curtains.

A whole wing is reserved for adults, complete with kitchen, canteen, common room, where the daily papers and weekly journals can be read, games room, where table tennis, darts, billiards and cards can be played, lecture room, committee room and library, which is also a silence room. Here the life of the village is centred; here the various clubs, the dramatic and the musical societies hold their meetings; here the debating society conducts its discussions; here are meetings of choirs of choral singers, gatherings of young people, Red Cross detachments, young farmers' clubs, and physical training classes; here, above all, is dancing.

The College, in fact, is a hive of activity, where you can eat, drink, dance, make merry and fall in love as well as learn, attend lectures, talk, and practise the arts and crafts of cookery, metal work, woodwork, painting, music or whatever else there may be. I could wish that I had the descriptive power to convey the comfort and grace of the environment in which these various activities take place; but the task demands a richer pen than mine. I can only emphasize the general impression of light and air and space, of graceful and harmonious lines, of rich and tasteful furnishings, of walls hung with the prints of some of the great pictures of the world.

ABOUT EDUCATION

Incidentally, on the day on which this is written there comes an announcement to the effect that two artists, Henry Moore, the sculptor, and Graham Sutherland, the painter, have been commissioned, the first to execute a sculpture for the quadrangle, the second, a large mural painting at the end of the Promenade. It is wholly consonant with the conception of the College that the best contemporary artists should be commissioned to enrich with the vision of the present the representation of noble works that have come down to us from the past. For where, after all, can the benison of beauty be more appropriately bestowed to exercise its civilizing influence upon the human mind, than in a place of education where young people will grow up at their most impressionable stage to receive and take into their souls its gracious image.

The outdoor amenities are not less remarkable. There are a swimming pool, ample playing fields and swings and a sand pit for the small children. There is a terrace where on summer afternoons ancient gents can sit in the sun and ladies gossip over their tea.

But this rhapsodical strain of writing ill befits a book on the subject of education so, lest my readers should be led to suspect that my enthusiasm has run away with my judgment, let me bring them and myself back to earth with a string of facts.

Some Questions Answered

I can best convey them in the form of answers to questions.

What is the origin of these Colleges? They were established by the Cambridgeshire Education Committee on the initiative of Henry Morris, Secretary for Education to the Cambridgeshire County Council. The first, at Sawston, was opened in 1930.

How many are there?

A scheme for eleven has been approved but only four have been built, at Sawston, Bottisham, Linton and Impington. The Impington College, the largest, was opened only at the beginning of the war.

How are they paid for?

Mainly out of the public funds, that is to say, out of the rates supplemented by Board of Education grants. There have also

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

been a number of donations, for example, from the Chivers family, who gave the site and £8,000 towards the cost of the Impington College. They are, however, in no sense charity institutions. Membership of the College is free, but many of the services and amenities are paid for by members of the College who enjoy them; others make contribution in the form of voluntary help. The clubs, for example, are run by volunteers and at Impington a rota of seventy women helpers prepares and serves meals and refreshments in the Canteen. Rooms for lectures have to be hired and students pay the normal fees for education classes.

How many attend the Colleges and what areas do they serve?

Each of the Colleges serves a number of different villages, varying from four to ten, and in normal times buses run from the outlying villages to the College on three evenings a week. Impington has a population of 7,500. In 1942 some thirteen hundred persons ranging in age from fourteen to seventy attended the College fairly regularly. The average weekly attendance at formal educational classes was about 300, an impressive figure this in wartime, when most young people are away, when many forms of Civil Defence exert their claims and blackout adds its difficulties. Three hundred members of His Majesty's forces use the College nightly, and during the winter of 1942-3 there were sixteen societies, clubs and classes in active operation for adults.

How is the College governed?

In the first instance by the Students' Council which is chosen by the Students' Association, membership of which is open to everybody who regularly attends the College. The Council is self-governing; it plans each evening the programme of College activities and appoints sub-committees to deal with the different departments, the library, the canteen, the Youth Clubs, the social functions and so on. In the last resort the government is vested in the Cambridgeshire Education Committee and the Board of Managers, the latter consisting of representatives of each constituent village and parish Council in the region served by the College, together with the Chairman of the Students' Council.

ABOUT EDUCATION

And now to justify both the enthusiasm which has run away with the author and the spate of information which he has inflicted on his reader. I find my justification by pointing to a vacuum, or rather to two vacua which these colleges are designed to fill.

Education as no longer a Thing Apart

The first is the familiar vacuum in which education takes place. I have described this and endeavoured to show to what extent education is an activity apart, conducted in isolation from the other activities of the community. Children go to school until they are fourteen, a circumstance in part resented by parents because it removes them from the wage-earning field, in part welcomed because it takes them out of mother's way. At fourteen they leave school and for the rest of their lives four out of five of the citizens of this country have no contact of any kind with the things of the mind. The effects of their schooling are all too soon forgotten, with the result that the school comes to be thought of as a little world apart, bearing no relation to the life of work and play. I have tried to show how those who dwell in this world, the teachers, are also people apart. When we meet them in ordinary life, we tend to look at them askance; they are not, we think, engaged in the ordinary jobs of ordinary folk; in fact, there is a suggestion at the back of our minds, that their work is not real work at all, but only a sort of play. That education is a necessary part of life and that those who carry it on are performing the most essential of services in the making not of houses or ships or guns but of something far more important, namely, citizens, few of us are willing to concede.

What the Village Colleges have done is to break through the ring fence with which education is surrounded and to let the air of ordinary social life into the vacuum. This they do in three ways; first, they bring education into the centre of village life. Here it is going on under one's nose in the very same building as that to which one goes evening after evening to dance and drink and chat. Secondly, they bridge the gap between school and daily life, that unfortunate gap during which the State, having sedulously looked after its citizens until they are

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

fourteen and being prepared to take a renewed interest in them when they are of fighting age, has been content to throw them helpless upon their own resources without supervision, help or encouragement. This gap is filled by the youth work of the Colleges. They provide classes for young people, they give them skill in various arts and crafts, they introduce them to drama and music; above all, they extend to them opportunities for mixing on equal terms with adults. Thirdly, the Colleges have transformed the conception of education. It is no longer a process which is abruptly truncated at fourteen; it continues throughout life.

It is to Sir Richard Livingstone more than to any other of our contemporaries that we owe the conception of education as a lifelong process. Minds, I have suggested, like the engines of cars, require periodic overhauling and doing up. But they are not done up, with the result that most of us at fifty are thinking the same old thoughts, doing the same old work, utilizing the same little stock of ideas as did duty when we started our adult life at twenty.

Hitherto, most adults have been deterred from continuing their education, partly because of the forbidding environment in which adult classes are held; partly by reason of the fact that to attend them requires a deliberate effort of the will. One steps aside from the ordinary path of daily life as lived by one's friends and neighbours to go to evening classes, precisely because evening classes have no integral connection with ordinary life. The Colleges have bridged the gap by bringing adult education right into the life of the community as a whole; they have made of it an activity which the good will of the village community approves and which its co-operation sustains. You have gone to the College to meet a friend; it is the most natural thing in the world to drop in to a lecture.

The Vacuum of Village Life

The second vacuum is the vacuum which is village life. One of the effects of the industrial revolution was to drain the villages into the towns. Most of what was young and vigorous in village life ebbed away, leaving behind an empty shell populated by the very young and the old; so far as the adoles-

ABOUT EDUCATION

cents were concerned, it was those who lacked the initiative to get away who stayed behind. Henry Morris grasped two important truths. The first was that the village taken by itself as a separate institution could not survive the competition of the towns. It was not large enough to provide an environment which could hold the young people at home.

For the village he therefore substituted the conception of the region with its group of villages centred upon the largest member of the group, and sought to turn it into a cultural centre of a new kind. Here is a quotation from his initial report: 'The only alternative to the complete subordination of the countryside to the town is the adoption of the rural region as a cultural and social unit, parallel to that of the town. The choice is no longer between village and town, but between the rural region and the town. Unless we can interpose the rural region between the village and the town, the village is doomed, and the victory of the town will be complete.'

Secondly, he saw that there must be a focus for the life of the village and that that focus must be its educational institution. 'Our communities,' he said, 'whether urban or rural, must be organized around their educational institutions.' In the countryside 'we must start with the conception of a community centre serving the population of a rural region at all points and all ages.' Hence, the conception of the College to serve as a focus for the life of the region.

The popularity of the Colleges—in spite of the hundred and one handicaps of wartime they are extending their activities in every direction—is proving the correctness of Morris's insight.

Praised in the Scott Report on the development and utilization of land in rural areas, they have set the model for future schemes of rural education so surely that, as Mr. H. M. Burton in his book *The Education of the Countryman* puts it, they are 'probably one of the most important contributions to English educational theory and practice during the present generation'.

In a word, there has occurred in our lifetime in the villages of one of our most backward counties, what is to all intents and purposes a revolution, a revolution which, after our English habit, most of us have let pass unnoticed and of which we are

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

still unaware. Because of it, life in the villages which are lucky enough to possess Colleges can never be the same again.

Recommendations for the Towns

I have described these Colleges in detail because they seem to me to afford the model to which the development of adult education should in the future seek to approximate. In the villages they are, I think, obviously the right model. What of the towns? For their use is, it is obvious, not confined to the villages. The new housing estates with their long lines of spick and span villas without churches, without halls, often without pubs, lacking in almost all those amenities which have brought men together in the past for the purposes of community life are manifestly crying out for institutions on similar lines, institutions designed to banish loneliness and restore the sense of community, call them Social Centres, Village Colleges, Community Halls or what you please. The Minister of Education has already recognized the need and in a Report issued in the winter of 1944 has recommended that surveys should be made with a view to finding convenient sites. A suitable site entails two or three acres of land upon which tennis courts, bowling greens and playing fields can be laid out. The building, says the Report, should contain a large hall with stage and dressing rooms, a gymnasium, cloak rooms, a library and a reading room, together with accommodation for prams, cars and possibly—the Minister is not quite sure of this—bars. This, of course, is for the future. But in one or two instances attempts have already been made to supply the need. For example the Player School at Bilborough, which was opened by the President of the Board of Education in June 1940 and the William Crane School, both of which owe their existence to the vision of Mr. A. H. Whipple, Director of Education for the City of Nottingham, and both of which are situated on big housing estates, furnish residents in the neighbourhood with many of the amenities of the Village College. In addition to their schools, they provide theatres, kitchens, clinics, canteens and reading rooms. Not less important is their provision of halls for meeting and assembly. All the buildings on the school site are made available in the evenings for

ABOUT EDUCATION

community-centre purposes in pursuance of the policy of ensuring that the schools will serve as the homes not only of educational but of social activities for the adults as well as for the children living on the neighbouring housing estates.

For, I come back to the point, the primary need of adult education is a place to serve as a common centre or focus for all the different activities which are grouped together under the term. I have spoken of the Village and the housing estate; can the need be met in the town proper? There is a number of alternatives.

(1) The Non-Residential Centre

First, there is the non-residential centre or Institute. We have admirable examples of these in London in the Mary Ward Settlement, the City Literary Institute and Morley College.

Three things of value seem to me to be embodied in these places. (a) A man can go there straight from his work, change, wash and feed. (b) He can make use of facilities which arise out of and are ancillary to education but which, nevertheless, do not except in the widest sense, form part of it, the library, the reading room, the common room in which one can enjoy discussion with people engaged in different educational disciplines, the common hall for meetings and assemblies, the theatre, the gymnasium. (c) He can enjoy in some small degree that sense of a common consciousness, which comes of being a member with others of an institution which exists for the pursuit of common aims, which both he and they believe to be important. Here all round you are people like yourself, pursuing their studies in the evening in order that they may become better and fuller men and women. You make contact with them, talk to them, plan your leisure with them, go rambles with them at the week-end; and they seem to you obviously worth-while people, more worth while, you think, as there is presently born within you something of 'the old school tie' spirit, than most of those whom you are accustomed to meet in the course of your ordinary life. As a result, you are confirmed in your conviction of the importance of what you and they are doing; your faith in the things of the mind and the

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

sense of your obligation to cultivate them are strengthened; you are pervaded by a new loyalty and a sense of the permanence and the dignity of the institution to which you are loyal. It is precisely of this loyalty and this sense that the adult education movement stands desperately in need.

(2) *Semi-Residential Institutions*

Secondly, you can live in a College, Hostel or Hall, go to your work in the day-time, and return to the College for your evening activities which are at least in part educational. The need for this kind of accommodation—Toynbee Hall in the East End of London provides an example of the kind of institution I have in mind—is felt more particularly by the great multitudes of young people living in our large towns with no alternative to cheap lodgings or, if their homes are in some not too distant suburb, the exhausting morning and evening journey to and from work. There exist, of course, already in some large towns Hostels for students, but there are not enough of them and little attempt is made to turn them into educational centres.

(3) *Residential Colleges*

I have included these under the heading of provision for towns, since it is for townspeople and not for country people that they would cater. But they ought, I think, nevertheless to be in the country. After the war the countryside of England will be littered with large empty houses, unusable by the private families who in happier times lived in them. They could be adapted and transformed into adult education Colleges. Who is to attend these Colleges? Adults are employed, and the difficulty, of course, is to induce employers to allow time off for education. That difficulty will not be overcome, until the popular estimate of the importance of education is changed. (I return to this point in a final chapter.) Taking, however, a long shot, I would suggest as desirable in the civilization of the future (a) a year's holiday for every adult at forty during some part of which he or she should attend a residential, adult educational college—I have indicated the reasons for this recommendation above;¹ (b) a three or six months' course for

¹ See pp. 121, 122.

ABOUT EDUCATION

adults every five years; (c) summer courses of, say, three months to be attended in each of three successive years by young workers entering industry.

If it comes to pass that most of us are in the future employed by the State the necessary arrangements should not be difficult. The State releases its employees for war; it could, it is obvious, release them for education, if it willed to do so. In the case of persons employed by private organizations, the administrative difficulties would be greater but the same principle would hold. Firms are now required by the State to release men for army, navy and air force for indefinite periods; they are even to be required to release young people for short specified periods for the purpose of continued education under the provisions of Mr. Butler's Education Act. If Parliament decreed the release of adults for educational purposes, this could be similarly arranged. But this book is not concerned with organization and I do not propose here to enter into a discussion of the problems involved.

Importance of Voluntary Bodies

A word must, however, be added to guard against misunderstanding. Because in the last resort the decision in such matters must rest with the State it does not, I think, follow that the education given to adults in residential Colleges should be organized by the State.

In the sphere of adult education the partnership between voluntary bodies concerned to ensure that the workers get the kind of education that they want—the W.E.A. is outstanding in this sphere—and the appropriate University with its concern for the maintenance of academic standards has worked very well. I am far from wishing to deny the importance of local influences; the existence of a residential College in its area should be a matter of pride to a Local Authority—it is already so in the case of the Village Colleges—and the Local Authority is, therefore, also concerned. I look, then, to a partnership of the State, the W.E.A. or other voluntary organization, the appropriate University and the relevant Local Education Authority for the erection, organization and staffing of residential Colleges. Even as things are, much could be

THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

done—it has been done in the famous High School movement in Denmark and Sweden—by the co-operation of employers and Trade Unions to give time off to young workers for the purposes of study. Finally I do not despair of seeing a residential College, even it may be a residential University, organized by the Labour movement. There have been many false starts in this direction, but the advantage to the young worker of residing in a University staffed and run by the movement of which he is a part and devoted to purposes of which he approves, are so obvious and substantial that in the end they may overcome even the apathy that has hitherto ignored the need for education and the vested interests that have stifled the faltering attempts that have been made to supply it. I return to this proposal in the next chapter. For at this point we find ourselves once more confronted with the question of will. Let the determination be sufficient and the requisite arrangements could be made to give it effect. Determination is the offspring of desire and desire depends upon the value which is placed upon that which we desire. Again and again in our argument we have reached the same point. What is wanted is a revision of the estimate which our country places upon the value of education. Can that revision be made?

Chapter Six

HOW CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF THE WORTH OF EDUCATION BE CHANGED?

The Butler Act

I have said very little in this book about new educational legislation whether enacted, introduced or pending. I have refrained not only because any observations which I might have made—and this applies to some that I have made—would be topical and liable, therefore, to be out of date within a few months of the publication of the book, but also because criticism on points of detail would be outside its purpose and scope.

For, it is obvious, it is only on points of detail that the Butler Act can be fairly criticized. Its purpose, as stated in the White Paper that preceded its appearance, is unimpeachable. 'To secure for children a happier childhood and a better start in life; to ensure a fuller measure of education and opportunity for young people and to provide means for all of developing the various talents with which they are endowed and so enriching the inheritance of the country whose citizens they are.' What could be more admirable? Give such a profession of intention, criticism could concern itself only with the practicability or otherwise of the measures proposed for giving effect to the intention.

Too Cheap and too Slow

From this point of view, criticism is all too easy. It would, for example, be easy to deliver sermons on the texts of money and time; easy to point out that the expenditure proposed is ludicrously inadequate; to dwell upon the facts that the additional cost of all Mr. Butler's proposals taken together will, in the seventh year after their inception, be only forty odd millions annually, that the extra cost when they are in *full* operation will be only sixty-seven and a half millions and that the total amount proposed to be spent on education will be only one

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

hundred and ninety and a half millions (it stood at about one hundred and twenty millions before the war); to draw renewed attention to the beggarly 2·7 millions proposed for both technical and adult education; to emphasize the fact that the total additional expenditure that these two services are to enjoy will be only £300,000 in the fifth year after the Act comes into operation, and £1,200,000 in the seventh; easier still, to contrast this figure with the fifteen million which we are spending daily on the war, or the one hundred and fifty million pounds a year which we spend on advertising in peace.

The facts relating to time afford a no less obvious target for criticism. I might have animadverted upon the announcement in the White Paper that no effective start can be made in reforming the educational system until at least eighteen months after the end of the war. If the end of the war came at the end of the year 1945—I am charitably supposing the end of the *European* war to be meant—then the school-leaving age would be raised to fifteen in June 1947 and free education introduced into secondary schools in 1950. No beginning, however, would have been made in providing Young People's Colleges until 1951.

As for the more far-reaching proposals in Mr. Butler's plan, such as the raising of the school-leaving age to sixteen, a number of children now being born may quite easily reach the age of fifteen, and leave school because they *are* fifteen, without benefiting from them. Indeed, it is highly probable that they will not benefit from them, for the rate of progress which occurs in fact will, if history is any guide, be much slower than the rate of progress for which provision is made on paper. Or, one might draw renewed attention to the fact that no developments in adult education are proposed until five and a half years after the termination of hostilities. . . .

Nor are money and time the only texts upon which sermons could be preached in denunciation of the Act. There is also the text of equality. The Act seeks very rightly to extend the length and increase the number of rungs on the second ladder.¹ Nevertheless inequality remains, for until the school-leaving age is raised to sixteen, most children will leave the new secondary

¹ See chap. iii, p. 57.

ABOUT EDUCATION

schools, both Modern and Technical, at fifteen, whereas those attending the Grammar Schools which pre-existed the present scheme will continue as heretofore to leave at sixteen or even at eighteen.

Or there is the question of boarding schools. Mr. Butler approves of them. 'It is', he has said in the House, 'the Government's desire that boarding facilities shall be provided by local authorities so that parents who for good reasons desire a residential education for their children may find the facilities available.' But no proposals are put forward to this end. It is nowhere suggested, for example, that in the case of children attending secondary schools as boarders, the cost of boarding as well as of tuition fees should be borne by the State. And while boarding schools are under consideration, what are we to say of the failure to make provision for residential adult Colleges? The question is purely rhetorical since I have already by implication answered it.¹

Indeed, this whole section is rhetorical, in the sense that discussion about details seems to me to be beside the point while the framework within which such discussion would fall into place is missing.

That People must care about Education

For with what sense of proportion does one complain about inequalities which beset the climbers on the second ladder, while the first ladder still stands untouched by legislation? Thus while I could continue until the end of the chapter to cavil at details affecting this or that provision of the Act, the only effect would be to make this book as unreadable as most of the others that the subject of education has provoked. Indeed, I fear lest in the interests of a mistaken attempt at thoroughness, I have already made too many sacrifices on the altar of unreadability. I refrain from adding to them for an obvious reason. None of the details I have mentioned has importance in the light of the overriding fact that whatever faults or defects there may be in point of expenditure or of dilatoriness or of speed in the present Act would disappear and many improvements could be introduced, given one con-

¹ See chap. v, pp. 123-140.

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

dition, that people cared about education. If they did, if their estimate of its worth were higher, there would be sufficient driving power to provide the money, to accelerate the tempo, to pay the teachers, to provide boarding school facilities and residential Colleges, above all to abolish the educational inequality and social injustice of the two ladders.

Mr. Butler himself clearly realizes that this is so. 'The rate at which it will be possible to proceed,' says the White Paper, 'will depend . . . on the financial resources available, having regard to our existing commitments, to the new claims we may have to meet and to such orders of priority as may have to be laid down. The rate of development of the proposals will therefore have to be determined from time to time in the light of these considerations.' In short, what is at stake here is a question of priorities, priorities graded on a scale of values, measured by reference to which some things are seen to be prior to others.

The Dust of a Vanished Age

Again, I could enter at length into a discussion of the religious controversy which rages round the 'dual control' of the schools. I refrain, partly because I do not wish to add to a controversy in which small men rear pompous mountains out of unimportant molehills that from their summits the sun of faction may shine the more hotly upon their disputatious souls, partly because the one thing that matters to those of us who care about education is the one thing upon which most of the controversialists are agreed, namely, the disastrous effects of the controversy in be-devilling all attempts at educational reform for the best part of a century.

I content myself with making as briefly as I can a number of obvious points which lead, as it seems to me, to a clear conclusion.

The present system is bad and the controversy unreal.

(i) The system is bad: (a) because it leads in undenominational schools to religious teaching being given by teachers who don't believe in it. Why, then, do they give it, since they are not compelled to do so? Because if they don't: (i) They will jeopardize their chances of promotion. (ii) They will throw

ABOUT EDUCATION

extra burdens upon their fellow teachers who must do double duty because of their abstention. Team spirit is strong among teachers. (iii) They would not in the first instance have been appointed.

(b) Because it is wrong that what purports to be divine truth should be communicated by those who think it neither divine nor true. There seems to be no reason to suppose that teachers, taking them by and large, are more religious than the average of the community; in fact, being intellectuals they are mostly agnostics.

The present arrangement pleases nobody; it affronts those who do think religious truth to be divine, who very properly hold that divine truth should be communicated by those who think it to be so; it affronts those who think it to be nothing of the kind, who no less properly think that it should not be communicated at all.

(2) The controversy is unreal: (a) Because it is a controversy between clergymen and politicians trying to score points in the game of political power and professional prestige assisted by a few fanatical laymen of high age-average and now rapidly dying off. The mass of the people do not care 'tuppence' about it one way or the other. Even those who make the greatest fuss are not themselves remarkable for the witness to the effects of religion upon their lives or, even—since this, perhaps, is asking rather much—for the punctuality of their religious observance and the regularity of their Church attendance. It is, of course, very edifying to evince on behalf of your children's welfare a zeal to which you are apparently indifferent as regards your own; at least, it would be edifying were it not for the countenance that is given to the suggestion that your zeal springs from the spirit of party and the enthusiasm of faction, rather than from the love of your neighbour and the love of your God. In so far as this suggestion is in fact conveyed, derision rather than edification is the appropriate response from the public. And derision is, in fact, the response which the public gives, 'what a storm in a teacup?' being the most appropriate description of the public's attitude. (b) Because, so far as least as concerns the Anglican denominational schools, there is precious little difference between the religious instruction

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

therein provided and that which is given in undenominational State schools in accordance with one or other of the syllabuses (usually drawn up by scholarly Divines) from which teachers are permitted to choose. Thus, in practice, it makes very little difference to a child's temporal or eternal welfare whether he gets his religion at an Anglican or a State school. (c) Because, whether he gets it at the one or the other, or whether he gets it not at all, makes apparently very little difference to his religious beliefs which by the time he is thirty will be non-existent.¹ (On the day on which this paragraph is written there is published in the paper the result of a questionnaire addressed to fifty girls in the A.T.S. One of the questions asked was, 'What does Easter mean?' Not one of the fifty knew. 'What is it in aid of?' asked a girl in a factory when the same question was put to her. A hundred men serving in H.M. Forces were asked at the same time if they could continue the Lord's Prayer after the words, 'Our Father which art in Heaven. . . .' Only seventy could do this. There seems to be no reason to think that this is not a sample figure.)

The conclusion would seem to be that the dust which the religious controversy has kicked up in the schools is the dust of a vanished age—an age of faith, and that the controversy has only been carried on into a different age, an age of indifference, in which it no longer has meaning, because no President of the Board of Education has yet had the courage to call the bluff of the religious bodies and put an end to it once and for all. (d) Because even if it were matter of general agreement that it was desirable for children belonging to a particular denomination to be taught the distinctive doctrines of the denomination, nobody with the exception of the Catholics appears to know what these distinctive doctrines are. (Letters to *The Times* by bishops, clergymen and others during the debates on Mr. Butler's Education Bill afford strong confirmation of this contention.)

¹ According to the reports of a recent Mass Observation survey only 10 per cent of the inhabitants of this country have any connection with any church, and only about 30 per cent say they have any belief in the tenets of the Christian religion.

That in England nothing ever Dies

Nevertheless, although those who believe in denominational doctrines are few, and those who know what they are, fewer, we cannot, it is obvious, prohibit denominational teaching. To attempt to do so would be to create a most unholy row. It is not merely that nothing in England, however moribund, is allowed to die. (When it was recently suggested to the seven members, all of them well over sixty, of the Comtist Society formed over a hundred years ago to convert the world—the *world*, mark you—to the doctrines of Auguste Comte, that the Society should be wound up on the ground that it was now improbable that its object would be achieved, the intrepid member responsible for the suggestion was nearly lynched by his indignant fellow members.) More important is the fact that the resentment aroused by an attack upon the forms and doctrines of 'the people's religion' would appear to grow in inverse proportion to people's belief in them. We all of us, I suppose, feel a little guilty in our hearts because we do not believe, and we compensate for our guilt by taking it out of anybody who proposes that the beliefs which we don't hold should cease to be taught.

On the other hand, doctrinal teaching cannot, it is obvious, be imposed against people's wishes. What, then, is the solution?

The Right Solution

The right one, I suggest, is obvious. It is that all schools should come under the same State code—this is, indeed, already entailed in the abolition of the two ladders—with the result that the distinction between denominational and undenominational schools would disappear. In every school a period should be set aside—one hour or, it may be, two or even three a week—for religious teaching. During this period ministers and priests purveying the different brands of the Christian religion should have the right of entry into all schools and of taking charge of, and giving instruction to the children whose parents belong to the denomination represented by the minister or priest. If there is no minister or priest of the denomination in the neighbourhood—that, of course, is 'just too bad', but

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

equally it is 'just too bad' for Catholics who live in a district where there is no Catholic chapel. The remedy, if they are zealous enough to take it, is obvious—to move somewhere else. The same remedy should be applied in cases where there is no Catholic priest available for the instruction of Catholic children in a State school.

It might even be contended that better provision could be made for some Catholic children if this proposal were adopted than now obtains. It would be better inasmuch as whereas, under present arrangements, Catholic children can receive Catholic instruction in schools only if there are enough of them in a neighbourhood to justify a Catholic school, under the proposal just made Catholic teaching would be given to Catholic children, if there are enough Catholic adults in the neighbourhood to justify the ministrations of *one* Catholic priest.

However, I do not stress this: I content myself by observing that a moderate and reasonable Anglican parson with whom I discussed this 'obvious solution' agreed with me that no reasonable man could find fault with it. 'It is only sectarian zeal', he said, 'which withstands this obvious common sense way out of the difficulty'.

As for the claim which is often put forward that there is a Catholic or even an Anglican angle upon history or literature, or that there is a Catholic or even an Anglican method of teaching the multiplication table that, we both of us agreed, was pretentious bunkum, put forward as a rationalization of the fierce disinclination of the governors of denominational schools to relinquish their powers. In so far as there was any substance in the claim, in so far, that is to say, as there really is a Catholic angle on history or science, the claim, we agreed, was harmful and should not be admitted. Now why, it may be asked, should not this obvious and straightforward solution be adopted? The answer is, because people do not care enough about education. If their estimate of its worth were higher, there would be sufficient drive behind proposals for educational reform to rout the partisans of faction and drive a way through the thicket of vested, denominational interests.

ABOUT EDUCATION

The Board of Education

Or, again, I could draw attention to the anomaly of the persistence for nearly half a century of a Board of Education that never meets¹ and of a President whose appointment is determined by any and every consideration except an interest in and knowledge of education. I could dwell upon the significance of the facts that there have been nineteen Presidents of the Board of Education since the Board was created forty-four years ago, sixteen since 1914 and eight within the last thirteen years;² that of the nineteen at least twelve came from the big public schools and only one (Arthur Henderson) owned an educational origin even remotely resembling an elementary school. I might go on to ask whether these men could have been fairly expected, able and intelligent as no doubt they were, to master the intricacies of so complex a subject in so short a time, and conclude that they held their appointments not because they had so mastered them, but because the Presidency of the Board of Education had come to be regarded as the stepping stone to higher office. Yet what office is more responsible than that which presides over the furnishing of the minds and the formation of the characters of the next generation? (Have we done so well ourselves that we should not think it of paramount importance to fit them to do better?) Is it not, one might ask, an office deserving the attention of one of the ablest and most enlightened members of a Government during the whole life of that Government, an office which should be regarded as at least as important as the War Office, the Foreign Office, or the Treasury, to be held by a Minister of first rank, entitled by virtue of his holding to a seat in the Cabinet? And should there not, one might go on to inquire, be a real Board, a Board composed of men who know something of education at first hand, of inspectors and ex-inspectors, of headmasters and assistant masters³ of schools, of directors of education, in addition to permanent Civil Servants; and should not the Board meet?

¹ This anomaly is, I understand, coming to an end now and the President is to become a Minister (April 1944).

² Seven have resigned since 1931.

³ These expressions include headmistresses and mistresses.

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

Is not the impression conveyed by the present Board, that of a kindly old 'gent' who had good intentions but lacked the experience—or should it be the determination?—to enable him to carry his intentions into effect, due precisely to the fact that there is no Board composed of men and women experienced in the actual day to day business of educating, to initiate schemes and to ratify them, just as its comparative powerlessness is due to the fact that its President is not a man of Cabinet rank? Again the answers to these questions are obvious. The government and direction of education in this country is what it is because education is valued no more than it is. If the people cared about education, if the public estimate of its worth were higher, we should insist upon education occupying a place on the scale of government priorities in time of peace not inferior to that which the War Office and the Air Ministry occupy in time of war.

The Money Factor

The mention of the War Office and the Air Ministry brings me back to the question of money. On the war, I repeat, we spend some fifteen millions a day; on advertising in peacetime one hundred and fifty millions a year; on the roads in peacetime twenty millions a year in order that motors may proceed at greater speeds in order to kill off in greater numbers the children whom we refuse to educate.¹ Dr. Spencer estimates that the cost of modernizing existing school buildings, equipping them with gymnasiums, swimming baths, adequate dining accommodation, assembly halls, workshops and sufficient classrooms to enable children to be taught in numbers of not more than twenty per class, plus the cost of building on the verges of towns or in green belts surrounding them such new schools as many be necessary to replace those that are past modernizing

¹ In 1938 the last year for which peace-time figures are available, the motors killed 6,600 persons and injured 226,854 on the roads of Great Britain alone; for the eleven years ending 1936 they killed 71,268 and injured 2,100,000. From the commencement of the war up to May 1944 they killed and injured 588,000. During the same period the total casualties inflicted by the enemy, upon armed forces and civilians, were 370,000.

ABOUT EDUCATION

is in the neighbourhood of a hundred million pounds. He makes the temperate proposal that this sum should be laid out at the end of the war at the rate of twenty millions for five years or ten millions for ten years. In an earlier chapter of this book,¹ I was carried away on the crest of the wave of my own eloquence to suggest that teachers' salaries should be doubled at a stroke as a promise of further financial benefits to come. Not to be taken seriously? Perhaps; perhaps not. Yet on any reckoning education will require a considerable addition of expenditure after the war.

The Open Conspiracy

In moments of optimistic fancy I have played with the idea of fomenting an Open Conspiracy at the end of the war. The conspirators would deem the war to be in full continuance for three months after the date on which it, in fact, came to an end. Let us suppose, for the sake of example, that the war does come to an end on 1st January of a certain year. Nobody will doubt that whatever that year may be and however late it may be, the country could, had the necessity arisen, have continued the war for a further three months, continued, then, its wartime rate of expenditure of fifteen million pounds a day during those three months. My conspirators will pretend that the war does in fact continue for these three months, during which time they will continue to submit themselves to all the restrictions, to the rationing of food, the rationing of petrol, the utility clothes and furniture and the rest which we have cheerfully endured during the war. The fifteen millions which as a result accrue daily during these three months will be set aside to form a fund—there would be four hundred and fifty millions of it at the end of the period—for the financing of the needs of peace, more particularly for those of housing and education and, since in this book I am concerned with education, I propose to be greedy and appropriate fifty million for the necessary increases in the salaries of teachers.

If we were prepared to subscribe to this pious conspiracy, we should have removed the reproach which has been so justly levelled at us in the past, that we are willing to spend on the

¹ See chap. iii, p. 83.

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED ?

purposes of war more freely than on those of peace, to devote to the destroying of our fellow men a hundred times what we are prepared to give to housing them, feeding them when hungry, tending them when sick, or educating their minds and forming their characters when young.

I have permitted myself when playing with this idea to hope that it might be possible to take the public into one's confidence and explain to them, as sharers in the conspiracy, the purposes for which they are asked to submit to a three months' continuance of wartime restrictions. What other than this, I have asked myself, can be meant by such phrases as 'you can trust democracy'—unless, indeed, it be that they are empty phrases? But then, coming half awake—for after all this that I have imagined is only a dream—I have realized that the proposal is impracticable, since to ask people to share in the conspiracy is to explode it. The termination of the war will see the immediate relaxation and recoil of the tightened wills of the people and my suggestion, I fear, is tantamount to asking the spring to remain coiled of its own volition. One cannot, I remind myself, in this my half awake stage, trust the people to the extent which my suggestion involves; they must be deceived, deceived, as Plato's statesmen would have deceived them, by a 'noble lie' for their own good and led to think that the war is still being waged when it is in fact finished, if the continuance of restrictions is to be borne. And then, wholly awake at last, I realize the folly of my imaginings, realize that even were it technically possible, possible that is to say to withhold from the people the news of the Armistice, no statesman could be found with the vision to conceive or the courage to make such a gesture, knowing, as he must know, that when the three months were done and the time had come to take the people into confidence, the end of the conspiracy would also be the end of his political career; and with that I stop imagining and remind myself, as I have reminded the reader many times in this chapter, that there are no short cuts to educational betterment, that there is only the slow and toilsome course of convincing the public that education is important, is, indeed, of such primary importance that no other reform for which the post-war world calls can exceed it and be placed above it,

ABOUT EDUCATION

saying to myself, as I have said before, that if people cared about education, if the public estimate of its worth were higher, then the money would be forthcoming for the building of new schools, the modernizing of old ones and the adequate remuneration of those who teach in them.

The Vicious Circle

But at this point it becomes essential to elucidate the implications of this repeated phrase of mine. 'If', I say, 'people cared about education, if the public estimate of its worth were higher'—then this, that and the other desirable thing would follow. It is easy to say 'if'; but how, it may be asked, are people to be induced to care? For, broadly speaking, it is only those who have themselves known the value of education who appreciate it or who can do so; only those who have some acquaintance with the life of the mind who perceive that the things of the mind are valuable. You cannot teach a blind man the glory of colour, or induce the cat who contemplates the chessboard to recognize the elegance of your combinations. Thus only the educated know that education is valuable; those who are not, want education, when they do, not for its own sake, but because other people have it and because its possession confers manifest advantages in life. If the educated had not these advantages, the uneducated would not want education for themselves or for itself.

The history books record plain for all to read the struggles of the people against education. The record tells how they have fought to keep their children at home; how they have planned and schemed and lied to rescue them from the clutches of their would-be educators at the earliest possible moment to supplement the family exchequer by their earnings; how a whole regiment of School Attendance Officers had to be recruited to frustrate the plans and keep the parents up to the scratch; how, in spite of them and especially in emergencies such as the present, any and every excuse is considered good enough to keep the child at home—some appalling figures for non-attendance were given at a wartime conference of the N.U.T. held in 1943; how permitted exemptions have been so numerous that in the North the school-leaving age was, for

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

many years, to all intents and purposes thirteen when throughout the rest of the country it was already fourteen; how the half-timers who worked at school in the morning and in factories in the afternoon, or vice versa, persisted up to the very last moment at which the public conscience would permit the outrage. As he comes to the end of the melancholy record, the reader will find it difficult not to put to himself the question, how is it possible that the attitude of the parents to education should ever change? As for the children, they have no two opinions on the matter. Most of them don't want to go to school at all; some, the bright ones, like it very much when they are there, but it is rare for a child not to want to leave at the earliest possible moment in order that he may earn for himself. In fact, the whole history of education in this country is little more than a series of footnotes to Aristotle's remark that 'all men have the need but few the desire for education'. Why do we need it? 'Because,' he said, we must be 'trained from childhood to like and to dislike the right things—in fact that is what proper education means.' He added, 'those who fail as legislators are those who do not establish a good system of education'.

The Hope in Labour

How can the vicious circle be broken? In the last resort I do not know; I do not believe that any of us know, for, let us be frank about it, there is no recipe for inducing ordinary people to care for education except that of educating them. Until they are educated they will not value education, yet until the community as a whole values education, it will not demand it with sufficient force to become an educated community.

Enclosed though my case is within the circumference of this circle, I propose, nevertheless, to hazard an opinion. It is that people will only be brought to care for education and to place a high estimate upon its worth when a government of the Left, by which I mean a predominantly Labour, Government, comes to power.

Here are three reasons for this view in ascending order of importance.

ABOUT EDUCATION

(1) The Argument from Sentiment

Many working-class people have a sentimental belief in the value of education. You can ascribe this to unworthy motives, to snobbery reinforced by the conviction that the class privileges of the educated are superior; to envy, which makes men covet what others have and they lack; or to ambition, which drives those who are clever enough to see the utilitarian value of education, to demand for themselves the knife which they believe will open for them the oyster of society; you can ascribe it even to pure sentimentality, and no doubt you will be partly right. Partly, but not wholly, for when you have come to the end of your cynical analysis, you will still have left something out. Deep down in the hearts of many Labour people there still burns a spark of that idealism which bursts into flame under the touch of the leader, of a Keir Hardie, a John Burns or, even, in his early crusading days, of a Ramsay MacDonald. It burns in the hearts of those men and women who in the face of every discouragement attend the classes organized by the W.E.A. and the National Council of Labour Colleges. Beset by an environment which thinks only in terms of bread and butter, they nevertheless have a faith that there are things beyond bread and butter. Tired after a long day's work in mill or factory or mine, they are yet prepared to make long journeys, often in the wet and almost always in the dark, that they may labour yet again at the things of the mind, not to better their positions, not to increase their salaries, not even that they may become leaders of the working-class movement, though this no doubt has been with many a powerful incentive, but because they want to increase their knowledge and to learn something of what great men and women have thought and said memorably about life.

For Socialism is not for such as these only a matter of bread and butter nor, when they demand a better world, do they think of it entirely in terms of the substitution of champagne and cigars for bread and butter. They, too, want to explore the higher reaches of the human spirit in literature and art, in religion and philosophy; to understand man's craving for beauty and holiness, and to be introduced to some of the con-

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

crete manifestations of that craving in paint and sound and stone; they, too, want to be made free of the wisdom of the sages.

They believe that there exists a kind of excellence unknown to them or known to them only in fleeting glimpses seen from afar. Factors in this excellence are beauty, truth and righteousness, the goods of the spirit. It is a bad society, say the best of the workers, because for us there is so little of these things in it. For here, it seems, is a treasure house of which we are denied the key; had we access to its treasures, we should be better, fuller and freer men and women. The demand for education, then, is in part a demand to be given the key. All honour to those that make it.

(2) *The Argument from Justice*

Secondly, the Labour movement believes in social justice. This belief, too, can no doubt be shown to be inspired at least in part by envy and covetousness; to be a rationalization of the desire to step into some rich man's shoes on the part of those who subscribe to the rich man's scale of values but desire a different division of the spoils; and, once again, the analysis will not be without its element of truth. Nevertheless, there is more in the demand for social justice than the cynic would admit. When people object to the two-ladder system of education on the ground of its injustice, what they resent is the fact that the rich man should be able to buy a superior brand of education for his son, simply because he is rich. Why, they ask, should the unjust social arrangements of one generation be thus perpetuated in the next? They resent, too, the fact that their children should not be given an equal chance with those of the more fortunate classes to show their paces and develop their talents. Why, they ask, should our children be handicapped from the outset? Why should they not start fair? In the name of what principle of justice? Let those who have put their signatures to the Atlantic Charter to assure us that we are fighting for democracy and promise us a better world after the war answer the question.

And so it is that the demand for the abolition of the two-ladder system of education is made by Labour organizations of every shade of opinion, notably by the Labour Party, whose

ABOUT EDUCATION

policy includes the demand that 'schools for all children over eleven should be brought under a common code of regulations for secondary schools' and that 'public and other schools . . . should be brought into the general educational system', and by the Council for Educational Advance representative of the Trades Union Congress, the Co-operative Union, the National Union of Teachers and the Workers' Educational Association which dots the i's and crosses the t's of the Labour Party's policy by demanding 'common standards of staffing, equipment and amenities in all schools', 'free education . . . for all children after the primary stage' and 'free access to Universities and Higher Technical Colleges for all who can benefit thereby'. These demands are put forward on the ground of justice. Who shall deny that they are just or that justice is a good?

(3) The Socialist Concept of the Duties of the State

A third reason goes deeper. As one looks back over history, one perceives an important truth which all the great civilizations of the past have known and upon which they have been willing to act. It is that man does not live by bread alone, but also by circuses; that he lives, in other words, not only by work but in play. And I here use the word 'play' to mean not merely the hitting and kicking of balls and the watching of others' hittings and kickings but the erecting at public expense of noble works and monuments in which the spirit of the civilization should receive permanent embodiment, so that future ages should marvel at the skill of its craftsmen, at the vision that inspired its artists, and the public spirit which actuated its rulers. Pericles, it will be remembered, in the speech which he delivered at the funeral of those Athenians who had been killed in the first year of the Peloponnesian War, specifies the provision of 'recreations for the spirit—contests and sacrifices all the year round and beauty in our public buildings' as falling within the obligations which the civilized State owes to its citizens.

I use the word 'play', then, to include the staging of public shows and ceremonies in which citizens might take delight when their work was done and feel themselves part of the community, being imbued with a gaiety and lifted to an exaltation of spirit

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

beyond what they could as individuals compass, and given a sense of the beauty and interest of life keener and more vivid than their unaided vision could realize. Thus the Colosseum in Rome, the Parthenon in Athens, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the amphitheatres, the baths, the palaces, the law courts of Roman antiquity are permanent expressions of the greatness of the civilization that expressed itself in them.

With the coming of Christianity the spirit of the age found its noblest outlet in the construction of Cathedrals. (Why is it, by the way, that, whenever we are moved to express our admiration for some monument or building it turns out, nine times out of ten, to be several hundreds of years old, while the greatest commendation we can make of our small towns, villages or inns is that they are unspoilt, meaning that they are not, as yet, spoilt by us?) The shows and ceremonies and festivals by which ancient and medieval States fostered and promoted the folk dancings and merry-makings which sprang from the people themselves were a no less notable expression of the public recognition of the truth that man cannot live by bread alone; that he must play as well as work.

Capitalist Concept of the Duties of the State

About the end of the eighteenth century there was ushered in by the industrial revolution a new conception of the State and of the functions which it might legitimately assume; a conception that embodied one of the most damnable heresies that has ever militated against the happiness of mankind.

This conception limited the State's function to the sphere of economics. That it should pay, now became the one criterion which it was legitimate to apply to the activity of the State; pay, that is to say, in terms of hard cash to the State, or pay by contributing to the accumulation of hard cash by private persons.

'Brass', as they call it in the North, became the sole standard of value and the sole ground for State action.

To spend public money on non-economic purposes was to waste it; even expenditure on education and health was defended on the ground that it paid—a man was a better clerk if he knew the multiplication table, a more lucrative workman

ABOUT EDUCATION

if he was not constantly going sick. Under the influence of this conception, architecture, music, the theatre, and the provision of public shows and ceremonies have all fallen into desuetude.

We take it, then, for granted that our State should not build Pyramids, Colosseums, Parthenons, Cathedrals or Palaces; it seems to us wholly in the nature of things that it should not provide out of public funds a State Theatre or a State Opera House where the best dramatic and musical art of the age could be displayed for the ennoblement and delight of its citizens—or did, until the war brought us to a new frame of mind which may be a prelude to a real awakening.

Since the war we have been disposed to envisage a wider and more generous function for the State and the establishment and success of C.E.M.A. and E.N.S.A. bear witness to the recognition by the State and the acceptance by the people of the truth that man must live by circuses as well as by bread.

And yet, it seems to me that so long as we live under a system of capitalist economics imperfectly mitigated by Christianity, it is idle to expect the State to advance very far in the recognition of its traditional function. For the principle upon which the capitalist State is founded, which its citizens are taught as part of their education and which they learn as men and women of its world, is that human beings are animated only by the desire for their own advantage conceived in monetary terms, with the result that, whatever cannot be shown to conduce to such advantage whether directly or indirectly is inadmissible as a motive in the lives of individuals or the policies of States.

Capitalist Opposition to Education

I know, of course, that it is the capitalist State which has accepted the obligation to educate its people. But it has admitted it grudgingly and at all stages of its development the education of the people has encountered the strongest opposition. Two main objections were urged against the education of the people; first, that by enabling them to read it would put ideas into their heads and both provoke and enable them to question Christianity and criticize God. I have referred in an earlier chapter¹ to the opposition to popular education on

¹ See chap. ii, p. 31.

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

the ground 'that it would enable the labouring classes to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity'. (Parenthetically it was an American Trades Union leader who recently told me that he did not want his branch members to be well educated. 'Education', he said, 'makes them harder to persuade that what I want them to do is for their own good.'

The second reason was based on a direct and realistic application of the principle that the sole function of the workers is labour for their betters. The following passage from an essay by Mandeville on Charity Schools written early in the eighteenth century affords a direct and clear-sighted application of the principle.

'Few children make any progress at school, but at the same time are capable of being employed in some business or other, so that every Hour of those of poor People spent at their Books is so much time lost to Society. Going to school in comparison to Working is Idleness, and the longer boys continue in this easy sort of Life, the more unfit they'll be, when grown up, for downright Labour, both as to Strength and Inclination. Men who are to remain and end their days in a Laborious, Tiresome and Painful Station of Life, the sooner they are put upon it at first, the more patiently they'll submit to it for ever after.'

Strong, forthright stuff, stronger and straighter, in fact, than the politer utterances of those who agree in their hearts with Mandeville while they deny him with their tongues. For, of course, Mandeville's sentiments would not sound well on a political platform. Nor, indeed, do they wholly conform to the requirements of a modern State, at least they have not done so since the beginning of the nineteenth century when the introduction of machines brought with it the need for a certain minimum of education in those who had to work them. There was also a growing demand for clerks in offices and just across the Channel, the spectacle of the Germans, as thorough in their pursuit of education as of everything else, achieving God knows what degree of efficiency to enable them to steal our trade and—who knows, for all things are possible between nations—destroy us in war.

ABOUT EDUCATION

And so for good utilitarian reasons nineteenth-century Governments whose policies were dominated by capitalist economics were driven to educate the people. But the degree of education which is necessary for the utilitarian ends I have indicated has already been achieved and it is very far from being obvious that to give people yet more education, to keep them at school until they are sixteen, to educate the clever ones at public expense until they are twenty-two, to set up Young People's Colleges, to make generous provision for continuous adult education will *pay* anybody at all. Very much the contrary, since the effects of education for citizenship will render people harder 'to persuade that what I want them to do is for their own good', while education for leisure may put ideas into people's heads, send them a-whoring after art and beauty and deprive some of them of their British birthright of Philistine common sense. They might even—God help us—take to reading poetry or, worse still, to writing it. Apart from all this, there is the undoubted fact that to abolish the class system of education is to abolish the foundations of class privilege and class power, as the figures given on pages 58-9 abundantly testify. How, then, can we expect that those who govern and hold power in the country at the present time should knock down the ladder, that privileged first ladder, up which their ancestors and their sons have climbed and still climb to power?

These things being so, and the governing principle of capitalist economics still operating in the background, I do not believe that the desires and hopes expressed in this book, which are also the desires and hopes of most educational reformers, will be fulfilled until a Labour Government comes to power in England. There will, no doubt, be concessions and advances; a little more will be built here, a little more spent there, but a radical reconsideration of our present educational system and, in particular, the abolition of the two ladders and with them the two roundabouts will have to wait for the coming of a Labour Government that has a majority and means business.

What a Labour Minister might do

A Labour Government which means business, represented by a Minister of Education who also meant business could,

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED ?

given a continuous run of power for a decade, carry through most if not all the changes advocated in this book. Let us assume that the Government recognizes the office of the Minister of Education—he is no longer the President of a non-existent Board—to be at least as important as that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Foreign Secretary. He has, then, a seat in the Cabinet. In virtue of this seat he has the authority to enable him to stand up to the other departments and he has been authorized by the Government to spend the £120,000,000—I estimate that this is the capital non-recurring sum involved—which the reforms advocated in the foregoing pages are likely to cost. He is a man of initiative and courage, who goes in no particular fear of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has the temerity to beard his own Civil Servants and to address to them a speech couched in the following terms: 'I want you to prepare me a scheme for education which is based upon the establishment of a single educational ladder up which all children from the ages of four or five to eighteen will climb. I want five thousand new schools and I want seventy thousand additional teachers. I want these teachers to be adequately trained and properly paid. I want Civic Colleges and Village Colleges. I want it to be made possible for all those who can profit from it to receive a public school and university education such as Eton and Winchester and Oxford and Cambridge have given in the past to some and wasted on more—but, incidentally, I want Eton and Winchester themselves to be transformed into Universities. To this end it will be necessary that all schools both public and private and all universities should come under the control of the State. Nevertheless, I want them to retain a high degree of autonomy, to be, in fact, to all intents and purposes, self-governing as they are now. I want all adults to continue their education and to this end I want you to build for me in the towns or on their outskirts institutions modelled on the Village Colleges. I want . . . ' But the list could be continued to cover all the proposals tentatively made in this book and many more which, owing to lack of space, I have omitted.

And that these things might be the more readily accomplished, the Minister would enlist to advise and assist him men and women whose experience would be of value, inspectors,

ABOUT EDUCATION

headmasters, headmistresses, assistant masters and mistresses and local education officers, who are at present kept at arm's length by the rigidity of the Civil Service structure.

If these things were willed by the people, if the people elected a Government to give effect to their will and if the Government appointed a man of the necessary vision and determination and were prepared to back him to the limit of their power and his energy, then I believe every one of these proposals could become an accomplished fact. How can I not believe this, believing as I do in the principle of democracy; believing, that is to say, that in the long run the people should and can decide the sort of community in which they are to live, decide how it should be run, decide, too, how the money that they pay in taxes is to be expended, in order that it may be so run; believing, further, that I live in a democracy and that it is to the end that this democracy may be preserved that the present war is being fought?

But the fact that we live in a democracy does not mean that the people as a whole are fully seized of the things which are in their own interests, nor does it mean that when they are seized of them, they will necessarily combine to obtain them. For the influences that have been and are brought to bear upon them to blind them to their own interests are very powerful. These influences are wielded by those who hold in its twentieth-century form the doctrine contained in the denunciation of Charity Schools quoted on page 161. It is because of these influences that the people have not, as yet, sent to Parliament a majority of members who represent their interests and are pledged to further them.

Two Vicious Circles

We here find ourselves returning once more to the embrace of the vicious circle, or rather, of two vicious circles. The circumference of the first runs as follows. It may with justice be said that it is only a tiny proportion of the population, namely, those who are well educated, that has both the insight to see and the determination to will the desirability of ending the present class system. How, then, can we expect to see in Parliament a majority pledged to end it? But equally it is only a Labour

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

Government backed by a Parliamentary majority who, if the foregoing argument is correct, will regard the education of the people as a prime necessity of public policy, and by virtue of so regarding it, transform the minority into a majority. I agree that this circle exists and is, in fact, vicious. Nevertheless, I believe that its circumference may be more easily broken at the point of education than at the point of politics. I believe, that is to say, that it is easier to educate the people so that they will insist of demanding social justice, than to obtain without education a Parliament which is pledged to pursue a policy of social justice; easier in other words to secure a radical improvement of the educational system in a capitalist State, than first to get Socialism and then, as part of Socialism, to put education first. It follows that I believe that the first requirement for those who desire, as I do, a socialist State is to insist upon the education of the people, for I hold that John Stuart Mill was right when, speaking of the beliefs of himself and his fellow Utilitarians, he tells us that what 'we principally thought of was to alter other people's opinions, to make them believe according to evidence and know what was their real interest, which, when they knew, they would, we thought, by the instrument of opinion enforce a regard to it upon one another.' But if men's reasons are to be convinced they must first be taught to reason.

Labour and Education

But there is a second vicious circle which lies wholly within the Labour movement itself. It is said that the workers do not care about education; in evidence there is called in witness, (1) the opposition that most working-class parents have always shown to the education of their children; (2) the domination of Labour's political horizon, and of the Trade Unionist's horizon in particular by a scale of priorities on which questions of wages and conditions rank first, questions of housing and health, second, of foreign relations, third, and the things of the mind and of the spirit rank not at all. British Labour, we are told, is incurably Philistine. See how it cold-shoulders its intellectuals!

I do not find either of these arguments convincing. In answer to the first it may be said that when young children could be

ABOUT EDUCATION

employed in mine, mill and factory and, what is more to the point, when they had to be so employed, in order that their wages might bring the earnings of a working-class family up to a bare subsistence level, to take them away from employment and send them to school entailed gross hardship amounting on occasion to actual privation. When men are as poor as most people have always been, it is natural that they should try to diminish their poverty by any means at their disposal. Thus the attempt to keep children at home bears witness less to a dislike of education among the victims of the industrial system than to the gross economic inequity of the system that victimized them. In answer to the second consideration there may be cited the cases of the many students—I have referred to them several times in this book—who after a hard day's work have given up their evenings to education for education's sake. Admittedly they are a small minority of the total mass, but is there any evidence that the minority is much or is any smaller than it is among the so-called educated classes who, having enjoyed the best in the way of education that money can buy for the first twenty years of their lives, think so little of it that most of them are never seen to open a book during the remainder?

Although, however, the force of these considerations is habitually overestimated by Labour's detractors, it is not, therefore, to be deduced that they have none. For there is a well-known principle—I have already invoked it—in terms of which they cannot but have force.

That Interest is Proportional to Knowledge and to Effort

It is the principle that interest grows with familiarity and that love depends upon effort. Let a man know a thing well, having laboured at it, and he will come to care for it. In fact, if the thing is a good thing and worth while in and for itself, it is only on these terms that he *will* come to care for it, for men's affections are subdued to the things they work in. If, for example, we have not refined and developed our senses of seeing and hearing by intercourse with beautiful sights and sounds, we cannot appreciate great pictures and respond to great music; if our minds have not been trained, we cannot be moved

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

by intellectual curiosity or feel the thrill of discovery in the realms of science and philosophy, or enjoy the pleasures of intellectual intercourse; if our spirits have not been cultivated by prayer, enriched by meditation and sharpened by the constant endeavour to increase in virtue and the love of God, we cannot, so the religions tell us, fully enjoy the benefits of God's goodness and love. And if anybody chooses to think that these are high-falutin' examples, I refer him to that teaching of his own experience which assures him that it is only in so far as he knows something about a thing that he can feel an interest in it—only in so far as he knows about machines that he enjoys being shown machines; only in so far as he has some acquaintance with farms or horses that he enjoys being shown his friend's stables and crops; only in so far as he knows something about food and wine that he will be able to appreciate those mysteriously *récherché* dishes served to him in the little restaurants in Montparnasse. A cat can look at a chessboard, but her casual glance lacks the interest of comprehension; a wife can scan the page of symbols in which the careful calculations of her mathematical husband have been embodied, but to her they are only meaningless marks on a white background, and unless she has been well trained, the husband will, as likely as not, find them in the wastepaper basket or serving as the foundation of his study fire.

Our interest in things, in short, is in a large measure proportional to our knowledge, and not only our interest but our love. One of the many arguments for the reading of great literature is that by enlarging our vision and deepening our understanding of the world it enables us to see more beauty and more passion, more scope for our sympathy and insight in life than we saw before; thus, literature makes life more interesting.

Now in this sense it is true that only those who are themselves educated men will have a true notion of the goods that education bestows and an accurate estimate of their value, since to care for the things of the mind we must first know them. In this sense, then, it cannot be expected that uneducated men and women will place a high value upon education. Those who have left school at fourteen and have had no subsequent edu-

ABOUT EDUCATION

cation cannot be regarded as educated men and women. It follows that we cannot expect working-class people to set a high value upon education until they have themselves enjoyed its benefits. Yet it is also true that until they set a much higher value upon education than they do and put it in the forefront of their programme, neither they nor their children will enjoy its benefits. Here, then, we find ourselves within the circumference of the second vicious circle.

How are the Circles to be Broken?

If it be the case that the true motive for the acquisition of education, namely, that it is necessary both as a condition and as a part of the good life, cannot be expected to prevail as a motive except upon those who are already educated, we must, it is obvious, look for another. This is not difficult to find. It is provided by self and class interest. Self and class interest insist on the fact that one at least of the purposes of education is social¹ and political and that, as long as the two ladders persist, most men will be denied the chance of obtaining the best that society has to offer. There is also the incentive of political power to which the implications of the figures relating to the origins of M.P.s given in the third chapter bear witness.² Those who are skilled in the arts of exposition and persuasion should not, in the light of these figures, find it difficult to make a convincing case for the remodelling of our educational system on utilitarian grounds. Yet they must themselves be convinced of the value of education on other grounds, since it is only those who value it as an end who can effectively present education as a means to other ends. What is needed, then, that the second vicious circle may be broken is a body of young men arising from within the Labour movement itself, who are not only able to appreciate such deeper purposes of education as are comprised in the phrases, 'education for citizenship' and 'education for the good life', but who perceive its value to Labour as a means to the acquisition of power. Whence can they be provided?

A Labour University

I can see only one answer to this question, that they should be

¹ See chap. ii, pp. 25-42. ² See chap. iii, pp. 58, 59.

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

provided from a Labour University which will train them for this purpose. The establishment of a Labour University is a project which has often been mooted. It raises many issues which cannot be discussed at the end of a book. The following considerations seem to me to be outstanding:

(1) Those who have been to Oxford and Cambridge have prestige and sometimes power, but although they are often revolutionary as undergraduates, they are not often found willing to exercise their talents on Labour's behalf in middle age. Oxford and Cambridge are still in the main nurseries of the Right.

(2) Red Brick Universities produce men with a progressive outlook but they have little prestige and rarely succeed in gaining power.

(3) Labour Colleges already exist; prominent among them is Ruskin. They turn out many good men but they have had singularly little influence on the Labour movement and on the country as a whole none at all. At the end of their College training, their students either go back to the working-class from which they emerged and in mine, mill or factory, become indistinguishable from their fellows, or they grasp the opportunity which their education has given them to climb into the middle class and, more royalist than the king, cling desperately to a respectability which they permit no hint of the revolutionary or the agitator to endanger. Or they become Trade Union organizers; or teachers in the Adult Education movement. For the last I have a profound admiration. It is not merely that they are men patient, modest and selfless, devoted to the cause of working-class education and expending the last ounce of their energy and capacity upon the classes which they so conscientiously teach; they are also, as I can testify, men of considerable intellectual gifts: they are good company, have a wide knowledge of people and affairs, and are able to talk with ease and opportunity to all sorts and conditions of men. And yet their influence in the country is very small and the W.E.A., under whose auspices their teaching is mainly carried on, still counts only a beggarly seventy thousand students in its classes.

Why is this? One of the reasons, I submit, is to be found in

ABOUT EDUCATION

the specialization both of tutors and of classes. The education which they give and receive revolves round a narrow group of subjects—Industrial History, Trade Unionism, Banking, Economics, Psychology and Literature. Admirable no doubt in their way, but, except for Literature, narrowing; and the classes in Literature are attended less by working-class folk than by middle-class ladies who assemble to read good plays and to listen to lectures on the sociological implications of the twentieth-century novel.

Surveying the Adult Education movement, I have come reluctantly to the conclusion that for the fulfilment of the purposes indicated in this chapter we must make a fresh start; that Labour, in fact, must have its own University. I cannot here discuss its character even in outline but there are two features that I would stress.

(4) First, it must not be another Red Brick; it must not, then, be in a town but in the country. It should be handsomely built, a credit, as are the Village Colleges, to the locality which contains, as well as to the movement which begets it. It should be comfortable and those who attend it should have the chance to learn, as men at Oxford and Cambridge have, something of the graces and amenities of life. Secondly, it should not at any rate in the first instance seek to train men in vocational subjects but should aim at giving them an all-round education.

Conclusion

When the non-vocational Danish High Schools had been in existence for a few years, it was found that the standards of Danish farming improved, although not agriculture but culture was taught at the High Schools. It was, nevertheless, possible for Møller and Watson to conclude in their book *Education In Democracy* that the schools were 'mainly responsible for the high standard of Danish farming'. It is not easy to understand what may be 'the mysterious relations' between these purely cultural institutions and the excellence of Danish butter. At least it is not easy for those who have not grasped the truth that in Sir Richard Livingstone's words 'all drive comes from the spirit and if you can give men a sense of

CAN OUR ESTIMATE OF WORTH BE CHANGED?

what human civilization means you give them the motive to acquire and use knowledge. Make people disinterested and keen and they can do anything. Without these qualities all the knowledge in the world is of little use.'

If, as I believe, this is true, then the criticism which can justly be levelled at most of the education which has been conducted under the auspices of the Labour movement is that it has been too narrowly vocational; it has been for politics, for power, for class and personal advancement; it has not been for life.

My conclusion is that if we are ever to transcend the dual system of education in this country, we must in the first place have a Labour Government. But a Labour Government is not enough; it must also be a Government that cares for education; and that there may be such a Government, the Labour movement must itself care for education. How is it to be caused to do so? Only if we can send into the movement a stream of young men and women who are imbued with a crusading spirit on behalf of the things of the mind and the determination to see that all their fellow citizens get the chance to care for the things for which they care themselves. And that they may not only value the things of the mind, but be filled with a determination to pass on a knowledge of the things which they value, they must themselves be trained in a Labour University.

INDEX OF NAMES

Aristotle, 47, 50-1, 54, 120-1, 155
B.B.C., 20, 33-4, 36-9
Beethoven, 102-3
Buchan, John, 112
Burton, H. M., 136
Butler, R. A., 81, 117, 121, 137, 140, 142-5
Churchill, W., 28, 29
Dickinson, Lowes, 112
Disraeli, 57
Ede, Chuter, 122-3, 128
Fisher, Dr. A. L., 17
Fry, Maxwell, 130
Gibbon, 77, 121
Green, E., 10, 57
Gropius, Walter, 130
Gruffydd, Professor, 83
Harper, Gertrude, 73
Hazlitt, 47
Hegel, 121
Hogg, Quintin, 34-5, 36
Huxley, Aldous, 119
Leigh, Mary, 27
Livingstone, Sir Richard, 10, 120-1, 135, 170
Lowe, Robert, 21, 22
Mandeville, 161
Mass Observation, 25-6, 27-8, 42, 147
Mill, James, 30
Mill, J. S., 30, 36-9, 165
Moore, Henry, 132
Morris, Henry, 132, 136
Mortimer, Raymond, 107
O'Connell, 34-5
Orr, Sir John, 60
Paton, Dr., 129
Peel, Sir Robert, 15
Pericles, 158
Plato, 47, 50, 52, 111, 153
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 49
Ross, J. F., 58-9
Spencer, Dr. F. H., 10, 12, 16, 22, 78, 129, 151
Sutherland, Graham, 132
Talboys, 106-7
Tawney, R. H., 118
Thomas, Ivor, 118
Watson, 170
Wells, H. G., 65-6
Whipple, A. H., 137
Wycherley, 93

